デスマーチからはじまる異世界狂想曲
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illustration:shri

Death March kara Hajimaru Isekai Kyousoukyoku - Volume 02 Chapter 01-06

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Death March 2-1 w/ TLN

Volume 2 Chapter 1:【Night Disturbance】

-Translator: MiaoMix [Comments will be in Pink]

-Editor: Options [Comments will be in Blue]

>> Satou here. I've never tried yobai or have had it done to me, but if it ever happens, I'd prefer to do it with a sexy mature woman! <<

(Yobai (夜這い) is a tradition of men (or women) sneaking into the bed of someone they like to have sex with them. Think of it as some sort of one-night stand. Admittedly, this is a little rapey if you think about it.)

Unable to remain asleep, I suddenly wake up only to find a naked little girl straddling me.

...What the? Is this a dream?

Back then, when I stayed at my grandfather's during the holidays, my younger sister or female cousins would jump on me like this to wake me up.

But unlike them, the little girl sitting on me is naked, and possesses none of my cousins' air of innocence.

The little girl's body sways slightly, then with a start, lays down on my bare chest.

(I NEED AN ADULT! I really think she was doing *something* here…)

That expression, doesn't it belong on a mature woman rather than a little girl?

“Oh? Did I wake you?”

Realizing that I woke up, the little girl with purple locks pecks me on the lips.

“*Ufufu*, I got to kiss you.”

She playfully whispers, holding up her torso with her hands on my chest, smiling somewhat bashfully.

Captivated by that enamoring look of bliss, I gently caress Arisa’s cheek.

—Enamoring?

She does does have an adorable face, but I don’t think that is an appropriate impression of a girl as young as her.

I brush such insignificant notions to the back of my mind, and turn to gaze at Arisa.

Arisa’s silhouette is outlined by a pale rosy glow.

Looks quite mysterious.

“Stop staring like that, it’s embarrassing.”

I seemed to have stared at Arisa’s face inadvertently. But without showing any disapproval on her face, Arisa merely pokes my nose lightly.

Feeling a sense of bashfulness as if I were once again a teenager, I move my eyes away from her face.

The pale rosy glow before might only have been a hallucination, as faint traces of it now remain only on her purple hair.

Tracing along her hair, my eyes come to rest where Arisa’s slender chest is hidden.

“Sheesh, men are ‘so perverted’...”

With a hand over her hair, Arisa clasps her hidden chest, seemingly embarrassed.

I mumble an apology to Arisa, then start recalling the series of events

that led up to this moment.

After purchasing the two of them from the slave trader, we…

◆

“Whether it is day or night, I will strive to serve you right.”

The little girl with purple locks says during the contract ceremony. Since neither Liza and the others nor the black-haired beauty said anything of the sort, was it some sort of vow to herself?

With the slave contract secured, I give the slave trader Nidoren one 「Gold」 as the processing fee.

I had planned on granting the beastgirls freedom, but Nidoren dissuaded me.

According to him, in the northern 「Shiga Kingdom」 where discrimination against demi-humans is severe, with the exception of some Fairy Tribe people, demi-human commoners cannot enter the cities and would be treated worse than slaves if they do.

More importantly, the beastgirls begged with teary eyes, “Please don’t abandon us,” so I gave up for now.

When we head to the Duchy in southern 「Shiga Kingdom」, I’ll consider this again.

Realizing I don’t have any knowledge of slavery, Nidoren then explains all about slave and how to train them.

He says that he will stay there until noon the day after next, so I can go to him for any questions or to buy additional slaves. Asking questions is be fine, but I have no intention to buy more slaves.

During the slave contact ceremony earlier, I obtained the skill 「Contact」. You would think I could now annul the slave contacts myself, but it’s not that simple.

Chanting is necessary to use the 「Contract」 skill. It is probably a special magical skill designed for contracts.

Other than slave contracts, the 「Contract」 skill seems to also be capable of forming normal contacts.

Then, outside the tent, all of us introduce ourselves to one another and begin to socialize.

“Then, allow me to introduce myself properly. I am Arisa, born in the former「Kingdom of Kuborke」. I am eleven this year, so there are four more until I come of age, but I will gladly provide nightly services if you could pardon my inexperience. Please cherish me from now on.”

(Kuborke spelled “クボォーク”. The middle “ォー” seems to represent not just a long “o” sound, but an even longer vowel that might sound like “eau” (as in “beau”) or “ore”.)(Basically Miao is saying he has no idea wtf the name means or how to say it)

With a fluent greeting unbefitting of her age, Arisa picks up her skirt and does a curtsey. Though the gesture itself looks graceful, due to the short length of her outfit and the lack of fasteners, her thighs are fully exposed.

Returning my eyes to her face, I simply answer, “Same here, I’m Satou.”

Well, I’ll have to say “No thank you” to any nightly services from such a little girl.

“... I’m Lulu. Fourteen years old. I’m from the「Kuborke Kingdom」. An ugly girl with a lacking figure like me… won’t be able to serve you at night, but I will work hard as a horse so… please don’t abandon me.”

With her head down and her bangs concealing her face, Lulu introduces herself. Her voice is a clear soprano quite easy on the ears. It would be better if she can stop trembling though.

Though she called her own figure lacking, her cup size looks to be about B-cup. If she has B-cups at fourteen, there is still much potential in the future. You don’t mean she values large breasts?

They’re fine as long as they’re soft!

Er, I don’t have the tiniest notion to make the middle-school-aged Lulu

serve me at night though.

After all, rather than purchasing Lulu for that reason, I did so due to Arisa's plea.

When such a young child begged me with teary eyes not to separate her from her only sister, I didn't have the heart to refuse.

Besides, after finding out information about Japan from Arisa, I plan on releasing Arisa from slavery, so I might as well let her only family come with.

Both girls are beauties yet clearly belong to different races, probably because they are half-sisters.

Regardless, with Lulu's charm, calling herself ugly is too much even if it was out of modesty.

Though her face is hidden, I can tell that compared to the winners of national teen pageants I saw on television, she is genuinely a gorgeous girl who leaves the others in her dust.

In a few words, she's exactly my type. If her personality is fine, I might even propose to her when she is an adult.

Er, letting my mind wander like this and looking at Lulu with ulterior motives is a little depraved. I tap myself on the head to clear such evil thoughts.

Following these two, I have the beastgirls also introduce themselves.

"Pochi, nano desu."

"Tama."

Probably because they're shy, Pochi and Tama don't say much.

Hearing their names, Arisa does a sudden jolt and the corner of her mouth twitches, but she doesn't voice her thoughts.

"I am Liza of the「Saffron Scale Tribe」.

(The name was literally "Orange Scale Tribe", but it seemed a little tacky

to me, so I picked the closest nice-sounding color I could.)(It's a fabulous shade of magenta)

After the village of Saffron Scales where I grew up was destroyed by the Weaselkins, I was sold to Shiga Kingdom as a slave. Fortunately, such a kind master was willing to accept us—”

Liza, you talk so much.

Arisa and Lulu probably don’t hold any prejudice against demi-humans, as they show no signs of disgust when the beastgirls reveal their appearances by removing their hoods. Maybe in other countries, demi-humans aren’t the target of discrimination?

Due to Arisa and Lulu’s unaffected attitudes, the beastgirls soon warm up to these two.

Scratching Pochi and Tama’s ears, Arisa says while making puppy eyes.

“It’s a little surprising you would accept these Ear Tribe girls as slaves.”

“Well, there were some circumstances that led up to this.”

Speaking of which, I had been mistaken due to the sheer number of Dogkins and Catkins, but Pochi and Tama are the only Dog or Cat Ear Tribe people in the「Seiryuu City」and even the entire County.

(Isn’t this a retcon from the WN?)

“Due to having appearance of humans yet the ears and tails of Beastkins, these two were abandoned at birth, but they are nice kids, so please do not shun them.”

Liza explains Pochi and Tama’s experience to Arisa and Lulu.

Pochi and Tama have titles like “Satou’s Slave”, “Changeling”, and “Dungeon Explorer”, as well as combat-related “___ Slayer” titles— but the「Yamato Stone」seem to have shown only the first.

The hidden title「Changeling」doesn’t seem to have the same meaning

as in typical fantasies, so I assume it refers to some kind of ancestral regression.

“Of course, as cute as they are, there’s no way we could hate them!”

“Cute~?”

“Tama is cute no desu!”

“Pochi is cute too~”

Quite content with Arisa’s praise, Pochi and Tama are sheepishly squirming.

Seems like they’ll get along just fine.

“Then let’s get back to the inn.”

There’s no point just standing in front of the slave trader’s tent, so I tell the five of them to start heading to the inn.

Arisa grabs my left hand and embraces it without missing a beat. It’s unnecessary skinship, but I was going to hold her hand to prevent being separated so I’ll allow it.

Pochi and Tama are fighting over the other hand, but as before there is a clear winner, Liza just picks the two of them up like carrying luggage.

Having given up on struggling, they relax their limbs and pipe down.

... They sure enjoy that pose.

Liza can’t carry her spear while holding those two, so I will hold on to it for now.

Lulu says “I can hold that”, but it’s much too heavy for a slender girl like her, so I keep it.

As it is supper time just before dusk, the open-air shops in the plaza smell quite nice.

Probably because people on the westside are used to eating out, even those who are not as well off are dining at the stalls.

Looking closely, I even see some collared slaves eating among the citizens. However, they're sitting on the ground to eat, unlike the citizens at tables.

Rumble rumble~~

A cute sound is heard. Turning around, I see a beet-red Lulu.

The way such a gorgeous girl gets embarrassed is so adorable. Though I don't consider her an option to date, but I can anticipate the future.

"This place smells great. Let's get some food here before going back."

I already know the answer, but I still ask everyone, "Anything in mind?"

"Meat~?"

"Meat is good no desu!"

"I would be fine with anything goshujin-sama provides, but if I really must say, it would be great to have some poultry."

Yup, the three of them answer as expected.

"But I thought slaves like us are fortunate enough just to have something to eat?"

Arisa voices her confusion with her head tilted, so I try asking what she has been eating.

"Before getting to「Seiryuu City」, rye bread and lukewarm soup was the best I could expect."

That's to be expected in a sense.

But the beastgirls' answers following Arisa's are quite shocking.

"Acorns~?"

"Weeds~"

"For demi-human slaves like us, at best we could expect one meal a day, so things nuts and leaves from the park, anything edible would be used to stave off hunger. Whenever we caught small animals, we would share it

amongst fellow slaves.”

Even under such adversity, they were willing to share their food? The beastgirls’ kindness seem to be innate, but it is also in large part due to growing up in an environment where they looked after one another.

While they are with me, I’ll let them eat as they please.

“Young master!”

A booming voice carries across the plaza.

Someone is probably hard of hearing, since that person has called out “Young master” several times without getting a response.

Liza says “Goshujin-sama” so I would turn around.

“What is it?”

“The open-air shop owner seems to be calling for you, goshujin-sama...”

Having been politely reminded, I turn toward that voice. Some unknown man is waving at me.

“You finally heard! Young master!”

Who’re you?

“Goshujin-sama, he is the man we saved from the slime.”

“Right, of course.”

After coming to this world, I can usually reliably memorize people’s faces, but for people I don’t feel like remembering, I’ll forget as usual.

Anyway, it’s no good to just ignore him, so I go up to him.

“Young Master, please eat here if you don’t mind! Of course, the slave girls too!”

With a wide grin, the middle-aged owner brings us to the eating area behind the stall.

While we’re here, might as well eat.

I smell meat dishes after all, and this shop is quite friendly to the beastgirls for once.

“What were you thinking, yelling like that— Oh, customers?”

“Yeah, didn’t I say? They were the demi-human girls who saved my life in the dungeon, and the young master who treated us well in the jail.”

“You mean your dream where you got to eat meat in a jail cell?”

“It wasn’t a dream!”

A chubby middle-aged woman comes, holding buckets of water.

Judging by the conversation, she is probably the female store owner.

“Well alright. Thank you so much for saving my husband’s life. Whatever you want is on the house today, so go ahead and stuff yourselves!”

“Yayy~?”

“Whoo~ nano desu!”

“We are grateful for your kindness.”

Hearing all that, Pochi and Tama quite literally pump their arms in joy.

“My, what a polite slave. So are you a so-called knowledge slave?”

“No, my job is mainly labor. It’s because the knowledge slave who taught me「Shiga Kingdom」language spoke politely.”

Liza calmly speaks with nostalgia.

After adoring Liza’s rare expression, I scan the eating area. Probably because they haven’t opened, there is no one else besides us.

With the owner couple’s permission, I let the slave girls sit on the chairs.

The female owner look conflicted at first, but probably recalling that they were the male owner’s savior, she changes her attitude and agrees.

Still, she expresses concern that other customers might object and start trouble, so we find a spot shielded by a divider and order our food.

“Here, thanks for waiting. This is made from fresh red deer innards,

which we got from a butcher we know.”

The male owner proudly declares, setting the bowls of innard stew in front of everyone. In addition, he drops a large steaming basket of sweet potatoes in the center of the table.

Other than organs, the innard stew was also cooked with deer sinew, greenish fava-like beans, and some shelled gingko-like nuts. The darkish threads are probably gobou, right?

(It’s the root of the [greater burdock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctium_lappa) plant that is used both as a medicine and as food in East Asia.)

Seeing the plates full of meat, Pochi and Tama make their eyes sparkle.

Even for Liza with her serious expression, her tail slapping the ground reveals her excitement.

“Alright, start eating before it gets cold.”

Arisa and Lulu say “itadakimasu” before starting to eat. Lulu seems to have been taught by Arisa.

(The phrases “いただきます” and “ご馳走さま” might be obvious to some, but they are customary for Japanese people to say before or after a meal, respectively. Here I only romanize them, because it doesn’t seem like they will be repeated much. Also, Satou seems to suggest that he would really only say it if the chef is someone he knows and cares about.)(If they are reading light novel and they don’t know what itadakimasu means, idk what happened to this world)

After graduating I often ate at resaurants, so I haven’t taught the beastgirls to say things like “itadakimasu” or “gochisousama”.

Things like washing their hands before eating and using utensils to eat, though, I did in fact teach them.

“Hot hot, nano desu.”

“*Hahu hahu*~?”

Having started impatiently, Pochi and Tama have their eyes upturned,

nearly scalded by the hot food.

“You have to blow on it like ‘fuu—’, then eat when it’s colder.”

“Yea!”

“Yes nano desu!”

Hearing me teach Pochi and Tama how to blow on their food, Arisa covers her mouth and looks down.

My「Enhanced Hearing」skill catches Arisa mumbling to herself, “Are you trying to ‘moe’ me to death?” but I do my best to ignore that.

“Tasty tasty~?”

“Delicious no desu!”

Pochi and Tama are holding their forks like rackets and stuffing their face like puppies. Their hair is going to get into the food, so I tie them up with ribbons. Everyone else is looking with envy, so I also give them ribbons.

Of course, they have also started to eat.

Liza stabs a piece of meat with her fork and sends it into her mouth deliberately. She’s only eating, but gives an impression of performing some sort of ritual.

Arisa and Lulu don’t say a word, not because they dislike the food but that they can’t do so while chowing down.

Arisa’s movements are graceful, but probably due to the excellent taste, her dainty cheeks are puffed up. That squirrel-like determined behavior is quite cute.

While Lulu is being more reserved, she is nonetheless eating as fast as she can.

“Truly delectable.”

“Chewy chewy~?”

“This is a nice and firm part no desu!”

Hearing Liza's praise of the innard stew, Pochi and Tama also try to describe their impression with their limited vocabulary.

Even Arisa and Lulu, with hands over their mouths, are nodding in agreement.

Well, that's enough of watching them eat, so shall I?

As I have already thoroughly enjoyed the smell, I put a spoonful of the soup directly into my mouth.

Hm, it's a little too salty, but undoubtedly delicious.

There are many laborers in this area, so that's probably why it is flavored this way.

Although innard stew does contain a variety of tastes, it may also turn out too gamey for some. But either due to meticulous preparation or the special selection of spices, this stew does not taste that way at all.

"Sir, how does it taste?"

"Mmm, it won't lose to food inside the citadel."

"You're patronizing me!"

The male owner scratches his nose and laughs to hide his bashfulness.

Probably quite happy about the praises, he soon comes back with additional dishes.

"Young master, if you don't mind, how about giving this a try?"

With that said, the male owner serves up a plate of stir-fried intestines with leek and other spices, or the so-called tetchan.

([Thisdish](https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%86%E3%83%83%E3%83%81%E3% is named after the Korean word for "large intestine" (대장). Man, these dishes doesn't sound appetizing when you translate them literally.)(So as a Korean I can assure you that it is delicious.)

The plate in his other hand is full of grilled slices of heart and liver. The serving is a little smaller though.

“This is quite the feast!”

“Yeah, enjoy it while it’s hot!”

“Recently, hunters are bringing in quite a lot of game! All of a sudden, this stuff became quite affordable so don’t be reserved!”

Fortunately, the「Meteor Showers」doesn’t seem to have caused the population of game animals to decline. As for why it is actually increasing, I hope it’s not the sign of some vicious monsters appearing in the mountains.

Well, that doesn’t matter for now. Since the female owner said so, I’ll enjoy this as best as I can.

Lulu seems to be too shy to reach for it, so I put some in a small dish and pass it to her.

Then, I am inadvertently led to do the same for everyone.

＞＞＞ Skill obtained:「Service」

I got a strange skill, but I don’t plan on adding skill points to it.

Everything in the large plate is delicious, but the liver is especially good. Though food poisoning is scary, I do kinda want to try this raw.

Pochi and Tama are ecstatic about the new types of meat, and after quickly finishing the ones in their small plate, they start going for the intestine stir-fry.

“So spicy.”

“S-, spicy stuff no desu.”

As soon as both of them take their first bites, they twist their faces, unable to handle the spiciness.

Of this were a manga, their eyes would be represented with X’s.

It is quite spicy, but not for me who is used to eating super spicy food.

It’s actually rather troublesome when I can’t enjoy it if it doesn’t make my mouth go numb.

“Looks like it’s stir-fried with lots of ground chili pepper. Pochi, Tama, don’t force yourself if you can’t handle the heat. Let me take care of this.”

While being considerate for Pochi and Tama, Liza doesn’t stop sending the intestine stir-fry into her mouth.

On the other hand, having already finished their innard stew, Pochi and Tama can only bit on their forks and enviously watch Liza eat.

Perhaps sympathizing with them, Arisa gives her portion of liver to Pochi and Tama. It might also be that she isn’t used to eating liver, but the two of them are nonetheless so excited they get up on their chairs.

Since not only Arisa and Lulu but also the beastgirls look like they’re not quite satisfied, I shall go order more food from the owners.

“Goshujin-sama, please allow me to go in your place. Just say the word.”

“No, it’s fine. I’m just ordering more food, as well as buying some jackets and shoes for Arisa and Lulu from nearby stalls.”

“I-, I can go buy those!”

Both Lulu and Liza stand up.

On the other hand, Pochi and Tama pause in the middle of chowing down on liver, and merely look up.

“Just keep eating, all of you. That’s an ‘order’!”

I could buy jackets after we finish eating, but I can’t focus on eating while Lulu’s chest is nearly visible while sitting across from me. Though Arisa next to her is also completely exposing her flat chest, I feel nothing.

“What is it, sir?”

“Yes, I would like some more innards stew.”

“Alright, leave it to me!”

It’s a little rude to ask for more when we are being treated, so while the

male owner goes to prepare the food, I give the female owner several 「Large Coppers」 as payment.

I also ask her if I can bring in food from other stalls, and she quickly agrees.

When the female owner leaves to attend to take-out customers, I request the male owner to recommend good chicken kebabs from around here.

“If it’s chicken kebabs, the stall with a red flag is quite nice. Other stores don’t take as much care in food prep.”

According to the owner, other stores dice and grill the chicken without any care.

Thanking his advice, I head toward the red flag store.

There is no sweet chili sauce flavor, only salted kebabs, but the alluring fragrance of grilled chicken makes me try one on the spot.

It is freshly grilled with charcoal. With just one bite, the juicy taste of the chicken fills my mouth.

It’s not too salty, as it is not marinated with table salt but rock salt.

—Ahh, I need a cold beer to go with this.

After highly praising the taste of the kebab to the owner, I buy all thirty kebabs fresh off the grill and return to where everyone is waiting.

On the way back, I sense some lights coming from a nearby alley, and I turn to look at it.

Numerous pairs of dim lights shine in the dark alley.

—Dogs?

Before my eyes adjust, the AR display reveals the true form of those lights.

Apparently, they are Dogkin slave children. There are also some Catkin children mixed among them.

As I take a step closer, the lights begin rustling as if panicked.

Taking another step, I finally see their figures in the shadow of the alley.

They look similar to dogs standing up on their hind legs. Almost like the cute mascots you might see in sunday morning children's shows. I can't imagine why anyone would mistreat them...

They're eyes are locked onto the half-eaten kebab in my hand.

A few of them even have their eyes closed, trying to enjoy the fragrance.

"Want this?"

"...I-, iz it hine?"

("Is it fine?")(KAWAII)

The Dogkin child answers with a slur. Seems like due to a different mouth structure, they can't speak the Shiga language quite clearly.

I slowly nod in response, while handing over all the leaf-wrapped kebabs I just bought.

"Don't fight over this, you have to share."

"Yee!"

"Dankz!"

After waving the children thanking in unison goodbye, I return to the store with the red flag once again. I really have to bring back what I buy this time.

While waiting for a new batch of chicken kebabs, I go around to buy the jackets and sandals I promised Arisa and Lulu.

The chicken kebabs are well-received, as even Arisa and also Lulu are delighted.

Liza is even moved to tears.

"So full~?"

"I'm filled with happiness nano desu!"

Finishing every last drop of the stew, Pochi and Tama sigh satisfied. Of

course, so are the other three. Especially Liza, who is silently reveling in the aftertaste.

After thanking the owners couple for such delicious food, I take everyone back to the inn.

◆

“Welcome— Satou-san?!”

Arriving at the Gateside Inn, we are greeted by Martha-chan’s energetic voice.

She even forgets to pick up the tray she dropped, and runs over to give me a hug in joy.

Pushing aside the curiously onlooking customers, the Madam comes out.

“I heard from Lady Mariantell, what a disaster! I’ve kept your room the way it is, so you can rest whenever… You sure brought many people with you, though!”

“Yes, without these children, I wouldn’t have come back from the dungeon alive.”

Arisa and Lulu joined only after leaving the dungeon, but it’s a hassle to explain in detail, so it was omitted. “Dungeon?” whispers Arisa from behind me. I’ll tell her about it later.

“Then, I want to also get a room for these kids, so do you have empty rooms?”

“Sorry, but we don’t...”

Hearing the Madam’s vague response, I see the owner inside, glaring with his arms crossed.

Not just the owner, the rubbernecking patrons are also giving the beastgirls death stares, while they exchange insulting whispers under their

breaths.

This kind of cowardly bullying is infuriating.

I move Pochi and Tama behind me to shelter them from the glares.

—Should we look for another place to stay?

It's already late, so let's just have Arisa and Lulu sleep in the room, while I camp outside at a nearby park with the beastgirls. Even if it's out in the open, it can't be worse than the cold stone floor inside the dungeon.

"Martha-chan, take these girls to my room. Madam, what do I owe you for two? I'll go camp outside with the others."

My self-control just isn't that good, as I am unable to avoid speaking in an aggressive tone.

Just as indignation makes my hands tremble with rage, they are covered by a pair of tiny hands— it's Arisa.

"Goshujin-sama, please quell your anger. Everyone else, too, has been glaring at us so much, we're shaking in fear."

Arisa steps in front of me and says to the Madam and the patrons behind her.

She says she's afraid, yet her un-childlike voice is fully composed.

"Ma'am, could we borrow a corner of your storehouse or the stable if it is convenient? These children saved many humans inside the dungeon. Proper rewards and punishment might apply only to the army, but couldn't you do something for these children's good deeds?"

"Oh, um… the storehouse is out of the question, but not many of our customers have their own carriages, so you can use the stable. Martha, go get that ready. As for Satou-san's room, I will get someone to add another bed, so please wait in the tavern for now."

Perhaps convinced by the young Arisa, the Madam quickly agrees to let the beastgirls stay in the stable. The partrons' animosity also dissipates, and they return to their seats a little dejected.

“Was I of any help at all?”

“Yeah, you really helped.”

Patting the head of Arisa who looks up with pride, I thank her sincerely.

When Marcha-chan guides us to the stable, I start lining the floor with fresh hay.

At first a little reluctant, but with a「Silver Coin」as the incentive, Martha-chan agrees to let us use as much hay as we want. In that case, I won’t hesitate at all.

I cover the pile of hay with a waterproof tent, then a layer of soft bed sheets. This way, they wouldn’t be constantly poked by the hay while sleeping.

When I made the hay mattress, I obtained the「Sewing」skill for some reason. This came out of nowhere, but it seems to be quite applicable, so I’ll deem myself lucky.

I also leave several sheets of fur and soft cloth from the among the loot for them to use as cover.

Let’s buy some warmer blankets tomorrow— Er, I should look for another place to lodge, actually.

“So puffy~?”

“It’s like the castle bed nano desu!”

Pochi and Tama happily tackle the bed of hay.

I give the bag of food and weapons to Liza, who is watching over the two with gratification.

Though slaves are forbidden to carry weapons within the city, but the slave trader Nidoren tells me that I can let them do so under the pretence of “guarding their master’s possessions”.

“If anyone comes looking for trouble, neutralize them without killing as best as you can. If you holler for me, I will quickly come for you.”

“Yes, I will definitely protect what goshujin-sama entrusted me with my life.”

“The three of you take priority, Liza, so remember to put your own safety first. It’s fine to abandon everything in an emergency.”

I advise the dutiful Liza who has her fist raised. Lost goods can just be purchased again, so their lives and dignity are more important.

There is also food among the deposited items, which I of course permit them to eat whenever they are hungry.

If I get up late tomorrow, I wouldn’t want these kids to starve!

After the additional bed is prepared, I take Arisa and Lulu into the now crowded room.

Making a bed for the beastgirls took more time than I expected, so the both of them have gotten sleepy. Hmm, Lulu looks more exhausted than sleepy, as her face is a bit pale.

I was planning on questioning why Arisa knows Japanese before going to bed, but there’s no hurry, so it can wait until tomorrow.

“Let’s go to bed.”

The only light source is the candle on the stand, so the room is quite dim.

Seeing me take off my jacket, Lulu rushes over to receive it, and hang it on the wooden hanger on the wall. Noticing that she wants to keep helping me take of my robe, I politely turn her down.

“That’s enough. Take care of yourself.”

“...Ye-, yes!”

Lulu’s quietness surprises me a little, so I look over to her. As soon as she matches my eyes, she tries to back away but trips on the bed frame and falls back.

“You alright?”

“I-, I’m, I’m alright! I’m really alright!”

I want to give her a hand, but she quickly refuses.

Lulu is probably not used to interacting with men.

—No, precisely because it is a man she is meeting for the first time, such an reaction is no surprise.

“That so? Then, go get ready.”

I tell them to get ready to sleep, but the two of them seem to have misunderstood.

Just so I don’t inadvertantly peek in on them changing, I turn around to fold up the robe I took off. It was not until the sound of clothes rustling stops, and Arisa reports, “We’re ready.” that I turn back.

—Why are they naked?

With the help of the「Pokerface」skill, I hide my inner agitation.

Do these girls sleep naked? Do they?!

“You two. The blankets here are very thin, so you’ll catch a cold if you fully undress.”

Doing my best to keep calm, I urge them to get dressed.

I think nothing of Arisa’s undeveloped body, but Lulu’s splendid figure you might only see on television nearly takes my breath away. I kinda hate myself for this.

I don’t intend to court Lulu right now, but it wouldn’t do if I let on any sign of arousal, and be marked as someone with that kind of preference.

So I overcome my compulsions with willpower, keeping my eyes away from Lulu’s not insignificant chest.

Before this leads to sexual harassment, I better go visit Seiryuu City’s red light district.

I look fifteen years old right now, but thankfully that seems to be old enough in this country, so I shouldn’t be turned away from the red light district.

To the two naked girls, I once again urge them to get dressed.

“The polo shirts I gave you earlier, wear them as pajamas.”

“Uh, um, what about service...”

Having excitedly grabbed the blankets on the bed, Arisa now asks blankly.

For slaves in this world, you don’t mean to say nightly services are the standard?

“No, no need. I’ll have you go buy some things tomorrow morning, so get some sleep now.”

“—No need?!”

Rather than replying to the baffled Arisa, I choose to first comfort Lulu who begins to tear up after hearing my words.

I cover up Lulu with a blanket, then hand her a handkerchief.

Presenting herself to a older man— albeit one who looks the same age as her— she had just met, even as a slave, must be quite painful. When she relaxed, it made sense that she would start crying.

If they were both older, my resolve would be under a huge pressure. But I have no desire to sexually harass teen girls, so I patiently explain, “I will never require any nightly services from you.”

Since Lulu can’t quite handle men, so while I wipe her tears away, I give Arisa the job of actually comforting Lulu.

Seeing those two like this, I really can’t tell who’s supposed to be the older sister.

Lulu finally cries herself to sleep after a while, and Arisa with her. I cover them with thin blankets and the same pelts I gave the beastgirls. They should be quite warm the whole night.

The way Arisa seems to be puffing her cheeks in dissatisfaction despite having her eyes closed must be my imagination…

Putting that aside for now, I’m also quite exhausted. Getting into my bed, I quickly become sleepy. After turning off the「Menu」that was still being displayed with my thought, I enter dreamland.

◆

Then we jump straight back to the beginning.

—Odd, I don’t remember lying on the same bed as Arisa.

Running my hand through Arisa’s hair, I enjoy its silkiness..

The smiling ticklish Arisa can’t be any cuter.

—Her features are well-defined, but since when did I develop an interest in little girls?

Arisa giggles, as she runs a finger across my chest.

Her white fingers look quite alluring.

—Alluring?

As if I have a split personality, while accepting Arisa's advances, I question my judgement with doubt.

The former seems to take precedence, as the latter is always quickly brushed aside. But it does not go away completely, resurfacing any time doubt begins to form.

By the time this mental tug-of-war is over, Arisa is already making her way down my body, kissing my ears, collarbone, and chest in sequence.

Reciprocating Arisa's skinship, I start caressing her neck while desire forms in my mind.

It makes no sense to feel that way for a little girl! There is just no way.

My blurry mind becomes a little clearer. I open the「Menu」with my thought, and turn on the「Log」display.

—There it is in the「Log」!

Slowly raising my torso, I bring up Arisa with my hands under her arms, and hug her tight with my face resting besides her neck.

Though her reaction seems a bit flustered, Arisa still lovingly embraces my head.

I softly yet clearly whisper the "order" into her ear.

"Arisa, you're forbidden from using any magic or skills. That's an order!"

Arisa lets go, looking at me with a twisted face of bewilderment.

Taking the chance, I continue my orders.

"Then I order you! Immediately cancel any active effects of your magic or skills!"

The order seems to be carried out quickly, as the logs show that the effect of the magic has been cancelled. The information displayed by the AR also continually changes.

Just in case, I have raised the「Mind Magic Resistance」skill that appeared in the log to the highest level. There were also skills like「Nightvision」and「Mind Magic」, but they're not important right now.

"But how..."

"Shouldn't I be the one asking? You're controlling me with your「Mind Magic」, to what end?"

That's right, including at the entrance of the inn and just now, she used magic twice.

The incident at the entrance could be condoned. The two spells she used were「Calm Field」and「Ennui Field」— probably meant to neutralize any animosity against the beastgirls.

However, what she just casted on me were the three spells「Charm Person」,「Temptation Field」, and「Heat Heart」.

I know she clearly intends to seduce me, then control me as she likes.

In shock after realizing Arisa knew Japanese, I neglected the fact that according to the AR display, her skills were「Unknown」— exactly, not「None」but「Unknown」.

"...What「Mind Magic」are you talking about?"

"Don't take me for a fool or play dumb. This is an order, state your goal."

I cut off her escape and press on.

＞＞＞ Skill obtained「Interrogation」.

Nice, just in time. I distribute skill points and enable it. Let's get it up to Level 5 or so.

"I'll say it again: truthfully state your goal."

"...Because I want to serve goshujin-sama!"

Perhaps no longer resisting, she answers a little peeved.

That graceful impression before has completely died away.

“No idea what you’re saying. Be more specific.”

“Man! Didn’t I say? The first time I saw you, it was love at first sight!”

—What?! Love at first sight?

The unexpected phrase freezes me in place, and I miss the chance to press on.

“That fine silky black hair! That defenseless look! That non-western boyish face! That slender torso! Those hairless smooth limbs! If only someone like that can become my husband! The boy of my dreams had become my master, but says he doesn’t need my services! I can’t allow that! That’s why I used magic! So goshujin-sama fall for me!”

Not letting the chance go, she reveals it all in rapid succession— it feels like she has given up.

“And after I fall for you, you plan on brainwashing me?”

“No! That’s not it! I made a vow when I became your slave, ‘Whether it is day or night, I will strive to serve you right!’ So seducing goshujin-sama and satisfying you is my responsibility as a slave!”

What’s with that logic?

Disturbingly, she doesn’t seem to be lying.

Slaves can’t disobey their master’s “orders” after all.

“I get your logic. But what did you really think?”

“I was waiting for goshujin-sama to come attack me, but you really fell asleep... I had no choice but to sneak onto the bed, and when I saw goshujin-sama’s sleeping face I couldn’t stop myself.”

She does a ‘teehee’ with a bashful face. It’s pissing me off, so I pinch her cheeks. This amount of punishment wouldn’t be too much right?

“It ’urts, it ’urts! ’Urting me can wait until my ’irst time~”

Her thin cheeks are actually quite stretchy.

It’s kinda fun, but I stop after Arisa’s tears start to gather.

“To think I tried so hard to hold myself back in the beginning~”

“So you attacked because you lost to your desires?”

“Yeah.” She nodds.

“Seriously, who really are you...”

The AR displays the following—

Name:

Arisa

Age:

11

Level:

10

Titles:

「Satou’s Slave」

「Witch of Doom」

「Insane Princess」

Skills:

「Mind Magic」

Gifts:

「Self Status」

「Status Check」

「Hide Skill」

「Itembox」

Abilities:

「Never Give Up」

「Over Boost」

—Wow, all skills I haven't seen before.

Arisa answers my question with a teasing tone.

“I am Tachibana Arisa, a Japanese just like you!”

(Her Japanese name is written “橘 亜里沙”)

—-

Chapter 2: Arisa

Death March 2-2 w/o TLN

Chapter 2:【Arisa】

-Translator: MiaoMix [Comments will be in Pink]

-Editor: Options [Comments will be in Blue]

>> Satou here. Since my office is located in the Holy Land of Sub-Cultures, the closest eatery is a maid café. After going there every day, I no longer object to being called ‘goshujin-sama’. <<

“More precisely, I am a former Japanese person who, without losing her memories as ‘Tachibana Arisa’, was reborn in「Kuborke Kingdom」. Are you the same? Wait, judging from your black hair, you must be a summoned Hero. Right, ‘Sato’-san?”

Looking at all the info on this girl shown by the AR, nothing suggests that she used to be Japanese or was ever named ‘Tachibana Arisa’.

My own status, too, does not say anything about Japan or ‘Suzuki Ichiro’.

“Why did you go quiet all of a sudden? Did you know that you are the second Japanese I’ve met here?”

Upon hearing that, my eyes can’t help but dart towards Lulu sleeping on the other bed.

“It’s not Lulu, okay? I have never met him, but apparently her great-grandfather was Japanese. Isn’t genetics cruel? If she was born in Japan, she could have become an idol.”

“How so? It’s true that Lulu has low self-esteem, but she’s probably

quite popular even in「Shiga Kingdom」, no?”

“Of course ‘Sato’-san would think so. Didn’t you hear Nidoren? To people in this world, she is no beauty.”

“Did you use「Mind Magic」to—”

“I didn’t.”

I was going to ask whether she used「Mind Magic」to make Lulu think badly of herself to protect her wellbeing, but I am immediately shot down.

“By the standards of beauty here, she has a flat, featureless face, thin lips, non-white skin, and lanky butt; the perfect coincidence of all dislikable features. But thanks to that, she hasn’t had a buyer.”

Huh? If typical Japanese features are disliked, then wouldn’t I also be considered an ugly man?

As if reading the concern on my face, Arisa adds.

“Though far from a handsome face, ‘Sato’-san, people just think you have the looks of a foreigner. But for Lulu, like gears perfectly misaligned by chance, she is considered not just ugly but almost hideous!”

Though standards of beauty are often said to differ with time and distance, she sure is unfortunate— no, considering her circumstances, probably fortunate.

It does not sit well with me, but let’s just say that people here don’t consider Lulu to be a beauty!

Seemingly having said enough about Lulu’s situation, Arisa changes the topic.

“So then, *Sato*-san, are you a Transmigrator or Translocator?”

(Transmigrator is “転生者 *tensei-sha*” meaning “one who reincarnated”, while Translocator is “転移者 *ten’i-sha*” or “one who transferred”. They’re used more or less as jargon here, so I chose rarely seen words to reflect that.) “Stop calling me ‘Sato-san’.”

“Got~it, goshujin-sama.”

I don’t mind people calling me ‘Satou’, but if I keep getting called ‘Sato’ I might start to forget that my real name is ‘Suzuki’. I admit there isn’t much of a difference, but still. [^Sato]

“Getting back on point, goshujin-sama, which one are you?”

“What’s the difference?”

I respond to Arisa’s question with a question. Even if she asks me whether I am a “Transmigrator” or a “Translocator”, I wouldn’t be able to tell without knowing what they mean.

“Transmigrators are people who died in an accident or of natural causes in the original world, then was reborn in this one. Translocators are people who were kidnapped to this world by a forceful summoning. A Hero would be a Translocator.”

Kidnapped...

With her slightly biased words in mind, which one am I?

“Must a Transmigrator start out as an infant?”

“There are stories of people reincarnating into adult bodies, but you can only start as an infant in this world!”

She’s quite certain about this. When I ask for confirmation with that in mind— “When I reincarnated, God told me about this.”

—I receive this kind of answer.

She met a god?

If I heard such talk in Japan, I would have quietly left pretending I don’t know the person, or at least question their sanity.

“Is a Translocator summoned exactly as they were? With the same clothing, items, and appearance?”

“People who are summoned would be wearing the same clothes. Of course, their appearances are also the same.”

My clothing didn’t change, but my appearance became younger though?

“Is that all hearsay?”

“I heard it directly from the Saga Empire’s Hero, so it’s probably correct. Since the only country that can summon Heroes from another world is Saga.”

Then could I find a way back if I go to「Saga Empire」?

When I finish my tour of「Shiga Kingdom」, my next destination shall be the「Saga Empire」.

And the other Japanese person Arisa mentioned, it’s that Hero right?
Then, what I should tell Arisa— Should I tell her the truth about me or keep it a secret?

Though she’s someone who tried to control me with「Mind Magic」and assault me, she has told me some important clues.

“I see, but I think I am neither of those! I just took a nap at my workplace, and found myself in the wilderness when I came to.”

“Did you not meet God?”

“I didn’t.”

Arisa crosses her arm and grumbles. Then, while still naked, she says: “In that case, were you standing in some sort of「Summoning Formation」when you came to this world?”

“No, I was alone in the wilderness.”

“Then did you start with a high level? Unlimited mana? A boatload of skills?”

“I was Level 1 with ten mana at the start. No skills either!”

... Well, there were one-use Icons like「Meteor Shower」.
“The heck, just how unreasonable is this game?”

Wait, why am I one being questioned and sympathized with?

“Enough about me, this is about you. Tell me every one of your skills one by one. Including any「Gifts」. Just so you know, that’s an ‘order’.”
“I would answer even if you didn’t order me, okay?

“First is「Mind」Magic, Level 5. Isn’t it cool? I put every skill point I got

since birth in there.”

—Every single one?

Arisa is Level 11. If she’s the same as me, she should have 110 skill points by now.

For「Mind Magic」, she only needs 10 points at most, no?

“Arisa, one question.”

“Yup, ask me anything. My bra size is—”

Stuffing a pillow into Arisa’s face while she’s giving out unnecessary information, I continue my question.

“When you level up each time, how many skill points do you get? Also, how many points do you need to raise a level in「Mind Magic」?”

“Mmm, sheesh, so violent! Skill points, is it? Every time I level up, I roll a 2d6. And by ‘2d6’, I mean the value from throwing two six-sided dice. Anywhere from two points to twelve, and seven points on average. The skill points needed to raise「Mind Magic」depends on the current level of the skill. More specifically—” [^Level]

I jot down what Arisa says in the「Memo」section of the「Social」tab.

—What’s going on?

The number of skill points that Arisa and I get leveling up, and the points needed to raise the level of a skill are completely different.

Is my case unique? Or is there some sort of rule?

“What is it?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

She expresses concern, but I just brush it aside.

If what Arisa says is true, then I learn skills at several times the speed of others— dozens of times even.

In some sense, this is almost as broken as「Meteor Shower」or「Full Map Exploration」.

I should wait until I can trust Arisa before telling her about this. I'll keep it a secret for now.

"Arisa, how do you learn new skills?"

"I just pick it out from a list!"

This part is the same, at least— no, wait. I missed something.

"And when are new skills added to that list?"

"The same time I get more skill points. When I fulfill some requirement— like a certain number of skill points or a requisite skill— they'll show up on the list. They're added when I collect half of the needed skill points, so it's easy to decide when I should keep or use my skill points!"

Yeah, this is different too.

In my case, I get corresponding skills as soon as I take any action. Other than the fact that I do so much more easily, the beastgirls are pretty much the same.

Without mentioning my own situation, I tell Arisa that the beastgirls gain skills in a different way from her, but Arisa points out that Transmigrators and Translocators like us are the exception.

There was some digression, but now Arisa's exposition of her skills continues.

"The skill「Self Status」, as the name suggests, allows me to check my own status. It's more detailed than the「Yamato Stone」. More importantly, when I level up, I can decide how status values like STR (strength) or INT (wisdom) and skill points are distributed."

Why she could choose any skill she likes from a list, seems to be the effect of「Self Status」.

Also, even her statues values can be distributed as she likes? I don't have such a function in「Menu」.

Maybe「Menu」is a some kind of variant of this skill.

“「Hide Skill」can hide all skills that I possess. Once it is active, casting 「Analyze」or using the「Yamato Stone」will show『Skills: None』.”

My Menu said『Skills: Unknown』though, so maybe it’s different from “Appraisal”-type skills?

“「Skills Check」allows me to see other people’s statuses.「Analyze」would work better, but I didn’t have the reincarnation bonus for it!”

I have her read out my status, but like with the「Yamato Stone」, it’s exactly the same as what I have set in the「Social」tab.

According to Arisa, the skill「Analyze」is the sum of all “Appraisal”-type skills like「Status Check」, so the effect is the same when used to check someone’s status. [^Analyze]

By the way, Arisa’s「Hide Skill」seems to be given by god, so no “Appraisal”-type skill can see through it.

No wonder my AR would say「Unknown」.

If「Hide Skill」was learned normally, it can be seen through by「Status Check」that is at least one level higher.

In terms of concealing information, my「Menu」’s「Social」tab settings seems be more versatile than Arisa’s「Hide Skill」, almost like an enhanced version of it.

“「Item Box」is just as its name says. An item storage like what you would see in games. There’s a limit to what I can store unlike the「Inventory」that Heroes normally have, but it still won’t take up space or get too heavy, very convenient~” [^Inventory]

As for capacity, apparently it can hold a hundred types of items, and a hundred each of the same type of items. Exactly like a game, almost.

On the other hand, for things like water that don’t have a set shape, one liter counts as one unit.

Her favorite trick, Arisa proudly declares, is to put small things into one large bag, so it would be counted by volume like water.

My「Storage」is probably something similar to「Inventory」.

I'm not sure whether only the name is different or also the way it works, but either way, it's quite convenient.

"I've talked too much, a little thirsty now."

Seeing Arisa clearing her throat, I stand up to get water for her, but she stops me.

Arisa suggests using this chance to show off「Item Box」, so I give her the permission to use it.

"「Item Box」open."

As Arisa chants quietly, she raises her hand out in a dramatic manner, and a flat black hole opens in front of her.

Is that the item box?

When I use「Storage」, there aren't any special effects like that flat black hole.

Arisa reaches into the black hole, and takes out a water jar. She puts her mouth directly on the jar to drink. Looking from the side, her face seems quite proud of herself.

The water spills and runs down her bare chest. That intentionally flirtatious way of drinking water really doesn't befit her age.

How old is she for real?

As her pose is too unseemly, I say, "At least use a cup", but she answers that since taking things out or putting things in require mana, she keeps doing so to a minimum.

It take mana to use it? This part is different from「Storage」too.

As Arisa is finished with the water jar, I ask her to let me try putting it back. How do I put this? It's like reaching into a box where you can barely see the contents.

>>> Skill obtained「Item Box」

I don't think I need a skill that's strictly worse than「Storage」…

Anyway, I'm more interested in knowing which among the yet-to-be-explained「Never Give Up」and「Over Boost」had allowed her to use her「Mind Magic」on me despite the 300 level difference.

"Fufufu, how is it? Wasn't I worth it? It's not easy to find a slave with this many skills!"

"Isn't there something else?"
"Uh..."

After becoming quiet for a bit, with a playful "Sheesh, you're so greedy", Arisa puts her hands in the air like a foreigner.

It pisses me off a little, so I give her a little chop on the head.

Of course, to avoid injuring her, I've adjusted my strength.

"No violence! Other than those, I have two「Unique Skills」, okay!"

Seeing her make a pose as if asking "Aren't I great?", I rough up her hair. Despite complaining "My hair will be messed up~" she seems a little happy.

Anyway, not「Abilities」but「Unique Skills」?

Interrupting my train of thought, Arisa starts her explanation.

"Even Lulu doesn't know about these! The first one is called「Overboost」. By consuming all of my mana and stamina, I can multiply the power of one hit by many fold! Isn't it cool? It's like a skill reserved for the heroine~"

Actually, it's more like a one-off cannon.

"The other one is「Never Give Up」. It's the power to never give up, no matter how strong the enemy is! More specifically, regardless of the target's defense or the level gap between us, Magic and other attacks have at least a 10% chance of working! Isn't it awesome?"

Awesome, true. She must have used this to overcome my magical defense. As evidence, the log contains various "Resisted ___ Magic" entries.

“But I can only use it three times at most. If I use any, I would recover one use each month. Since my spells just wouldn’t work on you, goshujin-sama, I use all 3 tries.”

What a troublesome skill. Should I say I’m glad that she is not my enemy?

According to her, even with this skill, it is meaningless if the opponent has complete resistance. For example, using「Flamethrower」against a fire dragon resistant all fire attacks.

“Oh yeah, goshujin-sama, how many「Unique Skills」do you have?”

“You want to know how many and not ‘what skills’?”

“Yup.「Unique Skills」are trump cards for people like us, after all, so you shouldn’t reveal them so easily, okay?”
I thought she wanted to know, but she’s advising me not to reveal them.

However, the problem isn’t how many I have, but that I don’t even have anything called「Unique Skills」.

This「Menu」display and the first「Meteor Shower」might count as「Unique Skills」, but how could I even tell?

Looking through each tab in the「Menu」, I find an inconspicuous「Abilities」section under the「Settings」tab.

Four items come up after opening it.

“—Four.”

“Oh~ not bad. According to God, the more「Unique Skills」you have, the more powerful your soul.”

Powerful? I wonder how the soul of an average guy like me can be considered powerful.

By the way, those four Abilities are「Menu」,「Unit Creation」,「Unit Deployment」, and「Undying」.

This「Menu」display is an「Ability」? Since they seem to work the same way as what Arisa calls「Unique Skills」and it can get confusing, I’ll just call

both「Unique Skills」.

Since my「Unique Skills」don't include「Storage」,「Radar」, and「Map」, those are probably all functions of「Menu」.

When I first got here, I thought the「Menu」wasn't much, but after experiencing how practical it was inside the dungeon, I wouldn't dare think that now.

As for the two that start with "Unit", they seem like what might appear in Strategy Games, and they're currently grayed out.「Undying」is the same way, but if I consider it from a game design perspective, maybe I need to fulfill some condition before they become available.

What「Undying」does is probably like how you would revive in a chapel when you die in a game. In that case, could the release condition be to experience death? I have no intention to try that. If that really is the case, it will be a long time before I actually unlock this.

Well, there's no point getting my brain fried thinking about problems with no solutions, so I'll shelf them for now.

"I want to confirm some things."

"Fire away~"

"How did you use「Mind Magic」without chanting a spell?"

When she had used it in front of the inn, there was no sign she had chanted.

"Well~ it's a part of「Self Status」, actually. As long as it is a spell I've learned, I can use it just by saying the「Command Word」in my head."

I had asked expectantly, but apparently I still have to chant successfully at least once.

Is using magic scrolls the only way?

Well, it's not like I don't have the money. Let's ask Zena-san to introduce me to a magical shop where I can buy scrolls.

"You mean you can't use magic?"

“I ran into a wall trying to chant spells...”

Well, that’s not a lie.

I know three spells, but those are basically cheating.

“Well, duh~ When I first heard other people chant, I almost gave up. It took me one year to learn how to do it in the end.”

“Makes sense. I only started learning two days ago, and really only put two hours in it.”

“What? That’s no time at all. If you could learn it that quickly, there would be a lot more magicians!”

It’s so spot-on, I have no rebuttal.

While I remained silent, Arisa tries to hug me, claiming she is cold. I gently peel her off, and throw the clothing and blankets at the side of the bed at her.

“Next, tell me what is in your「Item Box」. It wouldn’t do if you try to poison or knife me in my sleep.”

Though she hasn’t displayed any hostility against me, since she has made ridiculous claims like falling in love at first sight, let’s be a little cautious for now.

“Let’s see~ Five「Mind Magic」spellbooks.”

Arisa piles heavy, leather-bound books one by one on the bed. You could almost smell the age of these books.

The「Evaluation」skill reveals the value of these spellbooks, which is far greater than the price of Arisa and Lulu combined.

“If you sold these books, couldn’t you have bought your own freedom?”

“Since these are a slave’s property, it would be over if they are confiscated. What’s more, with my purple hair, I don’t know what might happen to me if I bring out these questionable books on「Mind Magic」...”

Indeed, the words「Mind Magic」would easily remind people of heinous

things like brainwashing or manipulation.

“Rather than this condemned type of magic, why didn’t you learn something else?”

“This was the only type I could find. I really wanted to use magic, so it was all self-taught.”

Yeah, I know what it’s like to want to use magic.

Oh, and speaking of which— “Purple hair is ominous?”

“Purple hair or eyes are usually seen as ominous. No one actually knows the reason, but if anything bad happens, people like me usually end up taking the blame.”

Now that she mentions it, the slave trader Nidoren did say something of that sort.

“Hmm, but it just looks like the hairdo of an old woman trying to be stylish.”

“Wh-, why did you have to make that comparison...”

Arisa keels over dejectedly on the bed, her lavish hair scattered across it. Such lavish hair shouldn’t be so despised for no reason at all.

Ah, we’re getting off topic. Let’s get back on point.

“Is that all you have in the「Item Box」?”

“There’s the water jar before and also several outfits. You want to see those?”

“Yeah, take them out. Not the water jar though.”

Seeing the outfits Arisa takes out is giving me a headache. From a yukata to a sailor uniform, as well as an unfinished maid maid outfit... She apparently sewed all those herself. Since Arisa doesn’t have the「Sewing」skill, it seems to be a talent from her previous life.

After jotting down the name of the spellbooks, I let her put everything back in the「Item Box」.

“You’re not going to confiscate these?”

“I might borrow the spellbooks from you later, but I am not going to confiscate anything.”

As Arisa tilts her head astounded, I tell her clearly.

If I keep the sailor uniform or maid outfit made to fit a little girl, I’ll be seen as a pervert.

“Right, keep this in the「Item Box」too.”

I say, as I hand Arisa a small bag, taken out from「Storage」under the covers.

“So heavy! Can I check inside?”

“Yes, of course. There’s ten「Gold」in total. Use it only when you have to in an emergency.”

It’s not just「Shiga Kingdom」money, but also that of「Saga Empire」.

In this turbulent world, you could get dragged into a riot and the creation of a dungeon while going on a date in the city. In case anything happens, it’s better to have her hold some cash.

“Giving gold to a slave… goshujin-sama, are you secretly rich?”

“I just earned it by chance.”

Arisa is breathtaken by the brilliant sheen of gold and silver inside the bag.

I thought it wasn’t a big amount, but she explains that the average citizen’s monthly income is less than one「Gold」. Though this isn’t a fair estimate due to different standards of living, from what I’ve seen, one「Gold」is worth about fifty to a hundred thousand Yen... I suppose that’s possible. [^Money]

“I shouldn’t have to say it, but don’t use it outside of an emergency, okay?”

“Sure!”

Though Arisa seems to be intentionally giving an ambiguous answer, there’s no one else who can keep the money securely, so I choose to

overlook it.

Since I have the「Sewing」skill, let's sew gold coins into amulets for the other kids later.

"Arisa, one last question."

"Okay~, come at me~"

Arisa answers lightheartedly like a baseball player.

"Could you tell me how you became a slave? This is not an order. You don't have to say if if you don't want to."

After some hesitation, Arisa begins to slowly reveal her story.

"I failed when I tried to reform my homeland using my knowledge from before reincarnation."

'Hey, I used to be a princess, you know!' Arisa says, trying to be upbeat.

"It went well at first, but after some unnatural failures, the kingdom fell into chaos before becoming occupied by the neiboring country."

"What did you do?"

"Just normal agricultural reforms. Like using leaf mold, composting, and crop rotation, that kind of basic administrative cheats!"

No idea what 'administrative cheats' is supposed to mean. Let's just call it administrative reform.

"Even if that failed, how could that have turn the country to chaos?"

"That's why I said it was 'unnatrual'. The mountains turned to wasteland after we collected leaf mold; fermenting compost released hoards of insect-type monsters; and planting clover and turnips didn't enrich the soil but made it even less fertile."

That really is quite absurd, but for her to call it "unnatural" specifically, that means...

"Someone sabotaged you?"

“That’s right, but it was too late when I found out. I thought it was due to differences between this alternate world and Earth, so I fell into a slump. I was already being called ‘Witch of Doom’ and ‘Insane Princess’.”

So that’s how she got those titles.

Sorry, Arisa. I thought it was because you brainwashed the king into creating a pretty boy harem for you.

“In that case, since the goal was to take over the country, wasn’t it pointless when there was nothing left? Wasn’t devastating the country counterproductive?”

“The land of my impoverished country meant nothing to them. They merely wanted access to the ‘Withered Dungeon’ under the castle.”

Arisa resentfully gnaws on her fingers.

“After taking over the country, in order to dissolve the citizens’ dissent, they openly executed the king, the crown prince, and all the king’s concubines.”

Tears start to gather on her indignant face.

“Then, gathering the remaining princes and princesses, they said—‘Your foolishness destroyed this country. You have no right to call yourself royalty.’ —Then under their orders, the court magician used his gift, 「Curse」, on the princes and princesses, including me. ‘You will remain a slave until you die’, he said. At the time I thought it really was my fault the country had fallen, so I willingly accepted the curse to become a slave.”

I take out a handkerchief from 「Storage」 under the covers to wipe her tears.

“Why did they make you into slaves?”

“It was all for the ritual to revive that ‘Withered Dungeon’. As slaves, we could neither resist or run away. Unlike 「Contracts」, there was only one person in the country who could cancel a 「Curse」...”

Gripping the handkerchief along with my hand, Arisa continues.

“Every month, on the night of the full moon, one of us was sacrificed in the depths of that dungeon for that sinister ritual...”

The grip on my hand lightens up.

“After a year, the dungeon seem to have been revived. The ritual sacrifices ended, but only I, with my ominously-colored hair, and Lulu, who is Father’s illegitimate child, were left. We were moved from the tower where we were imprisoned to another palace nearby. I didn’t know why they hadn’t gotten rid of us immediately. Now, I assume that we were insurance in case the dungeon withered again.”

As the king’s illegitimate daughter, Lulu would have counted as royalty by blood.

Since they appear to be different ethnicities, I had thought Lulu and Arisa were not sisters by blood, but they turn out to actually be related.

“And then, tragedy struck at the night of the next full moon. A demon suddenly appeared, destroying the citadel and downtown. The palace we were placed in was also destroyed, so Lulu and I escaped into the mountains.”

Though Arisa was ordered never to leave, the traitor who was registered as her master had apparently died when the castle was destroyed, and she was able to leave.

“I thought we were going to burn to death back then, but we were able to escape by a hair’s breadth when I discovered that Lulu’s title had become「No Master」. If I had been alone, I would have died back then.”

As if trying to wrap around it, Arisa embraces my arm and gets on my lap. I can feel her hands trembling slightly, so I let her be.

“We wandered in the mountains for ages, and when we almost died, the slave trader Nidoren picked us up. We were unable to enter any town as slaves without a master anyway. In order to avoid being bought by some pervert nobleman, I tried so hard to get on his good side. I thought I was going to get ulcers from the stress.”

She rests her head on my arm, where I can’t see her expression.

“Why didn’t you brainwash Nidoren with「Mind Magic」, and have him treat you like daughters?”

“That’s just it. I was so focused on getting on his good side, when I thought of that idea, we were already Nidoren’s slaves.”

“You can use magic even afterwards though.”

“That would have violated the contract, and the collar would tighten up and might have killed me.”

Hm? Wait a minute.

I turn Arisa around to face me.

“Didn’t you just abuse magic to push me down? Did that not violate the contract?”

Her face looking up at me makes a cheeky smile.

“That was me serving you as a slave! Didn’t I make the vow during the「Contract」?”

—Whether it is day or night, I will strive to serve you right.

“That’s why I used magic, to serve you every way I can!”

With her hands motioning me to come closer, while saying “So please embrace me~ Lust for my immature flesh!” she tries to pushing herself on me, so I take her down with a chop.

“Anyway, what was that Demon trying to do?”

“Dunno. Since it was a Demon, it probably sought out the dungeon to raise a Demon King?”

It’s not a cuckoo that goes around leaving its eggs in nests.

“Dungeons are for raising Demon Kings?”

“That’s the theory of some scholars, but the gods neither confirm nor deny it. Thing is, almost every Demon King that has ever appeared did so near a dungeon.”

So that ‘Wagahai’ guy, he made the dungeon in「Seiryuu City」so that a Demon King would appear here?

Speaking of which, the Madam of「Gateside Inn」might have said the same thing.

“Oh yeah, could I also ask you a question?”

“What?”

“When we were in front of the inn, you said that without Liza and the others, you ‘wouldn’t have come back from the dungeon alive’, right?”

I nod in acknowledgement.

“Did you go to the「Dungeon City Seriviera」?” [^dungeon]

“Nope, didn’t.”

Oh yeah, that city doesn’t discriminate against demi-humans much, I think.

Maybe the entire city is inside the dungeon, or maybe it’s just sitting at the entrance of one? I want to go see it.

“Then, a dungeon in another country?”

“No, there was a dungeon incident right here in「Seiryuu City」.”

Arisa, after breathlessly whispering “no way”— “That’s the trouble Nidoren was caught in, a dungeon?!”

—approaches me suddenly. Her face is too close.

Pushing Arisa back, I tell her everything about the riot and how a demon created a dungeon.

Excluding the part about me destroying a High Class Demon in a silver mask.

“You’re saying, a demon created a new dungeon?”

I nod in response to the awestruck Arisa.

Is this what surprised her?

“The thing is, there were only six dungeons on this continent. The youngest dungeon was created more than a hundred years ago. A Demon King’s remains are the foundations for a dungeon, or so a book said.”

“Since it was made by a Low Class Demon, I though dungeons are worth a dime a dozen.”

“It’s not like that at all. Without using some Artifact, it should be impossible to create a dungeon! And then, for what purpose...” [^Artifact]

“Maybe to mass produce monsters to fight the Hero?”

Ignoring my off-hand suggestion, Arisa seriously contemplates.

I don’t mind her putting her hands around my neck, but could she not wrap her legs around my waist?

“The old dungeons like Seriviera would be enough for that. Dungeons expand as they get older, so there’s no need to spend time making a new one.”

“Then, just as a diversion, or setting up for the future?”

Like distracting the Hero, by hiding a tree in a forest.

“That’s possible.”

I give the still uncertain Arisa a pat on the head.

What the demons are planning, there is too little information to tell. At least there are no demons within the County or the dungeon right now, not even ones like the Eyeball Demon disguised like a Mimic. [^Mimic]

They could be summoned like Wagahai guy, but there’s no point to just worry about that.

If I get bogged down by things like this I would start balding.

“Could I get into the Seiryuu City Dungeon?”

Arisa asks while looking upwards with a serious face— I don’t mind that, but why is she pressing her flat chest against me?

“Probably not? I heard from someone I know, it will be closed for the time being.”

“I see...”

The person I know, Zena-san, didn’t explicity say, but she implied as

much when we were in the citadel.

“Why do you want to go to the dungeon? What’s the point of going to that dangerous place full of monsters?”

“I want to go precisely because there are monsters!”

“Do you have some beef with monsters?”

“Not at all. I just want to raise my Level.”

Raise her Level... This isn’t a game— no, she wants to raise her Level precisely because this is reality, doesn’t she?

When the beastgirls raised their Levels, their statuses also went up, increasing their chances of survival. In a dangerous world like this, raising one’s Level is definitely important.

Still, the average citizen is quite low-leveled. Even most soldiers are only Level 5 to 7.

“If you really want to go, I’ll try to ask them.”

I can’t stand seeing Arisa looking so dejected, so I throw her a bone.

“Really?!”

“Yeah, I don’t know whether you actually can though, so don’t expect too much, okay?”

“Oh, thank you!”

Seeing her break into a wide grin, I push the now-perky Arisa away, this time pulling a shirt over her head.

“But other than defeating monsters, is there no other way to raise one’s Level?”

“Of course there is. The thing is, this is the most efficient!”

Talk of efficiency reminds me of MMORPGs.

After all, I used to hunt more efficient high-experience monsters all the time.

“Compared to killing people or beasts, the experience you gain killing

monsters is several times higher. This is just a guess based on what I overheard from the soldiers and knights in town, so I don't know the details."

If it were the same, there would probably be nobles who massacre commoners and slaves for experience points, and people who raise livestock solely to kill rather than to eat.

"Arisa, have you ever gone to kill monsters to raise your level?"

"I would have if I could! I raised my Level through reading. Did you know? You gain experience as you learn new knowledge! Thanks to that, I was able to raise my Level while huddled up in the palace."

I see, as this isn't a game, combat isn't the only way to raise your level.

For the rest of the night, until Arisa nodded off, we talked about various aspects of this world's system.

—--

[^sato]: Arisa has been using the kanji for "Sato" (佐藤). I don't think the text ever make it clear how Satou knows whether someone is doing that,, but I'm guessing there's a difference in stress.

[^analyze]: All "Appraisal"-type skills use the kanji "鑑定", but may have different furigana (way of reading), so I just go by the latter. For example, Skills Check is written "能力鑑定" and Analyze is just "鑑定".

[^inventory]: The kanji says "無限収納", literally "Infinite Storage".

[^money]: ￥50,000 *100,000 is about $ 400* 800 (USD). It's really not much, but as he mentioned, the standard of living here is much lower.

[^dungeon]: Spelled セリビーラ

[^mimic]: One of the classic monsters in dungeon games that would disguise itself as a treasure chest or other seemingly harmless objects.

[^artifact]: The kanji says "伝説級の秘宝", or "Legendary Class

Treasure”.

[^level]: If you are at all interested, I’m guessing she has had about 60-80 skill points (7 points average per level *10 levels raised = 70 points), and Mind Magic requires about 4 or 5 points* the next level to raise it it (60 or 75 points total).

Chapter 3: Misunderstandings are the Spice of Love

Death March 2-3 w/o TLN

Volume 2 Chapter 3:【Misunderstandings are the Spice of Love】

-Translator: MiaoMix [Comments will be in Pink]

-Editor: Options [Comments will be in Blue]

>> Satou here. Love comedies of all ages tend to use misunderstandings or disagreements to push the story to a climax. In reality, I'm afraid the relationship might end right there! <<

I can hear the sound of people outside. Did I oversleep a bit?

While savoring the warmth under the covers, I think about last night.

Not only did I learn a lot of knowledge yesterday, but also how Arisa became a slave.

Just before Arisa fell asleep, I tried asking, "Would you like to be freed?" But she says that under her「Curse」, it would be impossible.

If she were to be freed, it would violate the condition of the「Curse」, and she would die a painful death. It seems to be a hex-like skill. [^Curse]

At big cities like the Duchy or the Capital, there may be someone who can cancel or override「Curse」, so we'll think about freeing her from slavery when we get there.

When I first found out Arisa was hypnotizing me with magic, I planned on sending her back the next morning, but after hearing about her tragic past, I'm not so heartless that I would abandon a helpless Japanese girl in this turbulent world.

This kindness may be my downfall, but I'll deal with that when it happens.

The advantage of being Level 310 and having wealth rivaling a nation will

trump everything.

As if to flatten that almost arrogant determination, the door suddenly swings open with a bang.

—without knocking at all.

“Satou-san, are you awake? Your lover is here!”

Martha-chan is already so energetic this early in the morning.

Behind her, Zena-san is mumbling, “I… we’re not lovers...” while scrambling to cover Martha-chan’s mouth.

“Good morning.”

I sit up to greet them.

A little cold— Right, Arisa took off my shirt yesterday.

“Ooh, what a nice body!”

Martha-chan admires my bare chest with interest. As for Zena-san, she is standing in the back covering her beet-red face, but her eyes are peeking curiously through her fingers.

As a soldier, shouldn’t she be used to seeing men naked?

“Excuse me, I have been inconsiderate. I will put on something right now.”

I push myself up, trying to get off the bed.

“Aahn ♪”

—Feels warm to the touch.

Looking down, I see a half-naked little girl. My hand had landed on her chest— Oh yeah, she fell asleep like this last night.

Seeing the little girl sleeping on my bed, Zena-san’s face turns from pink to blue.

“... Goshujin-sama… if you’re that rough… I’ll break...”

At the same time, Lulu talks in her sleep with impeccable timing.

Looking over, I see her fast asleep facing away from us, having just turned over. Her short clothing is raised up, completely exposing her cute butt— speaking of which, she isn’t wearing underwear!

Not only that, there are red stains on the sheets…

What? I didn’t do anything to her though?

“In-, in-, indecent! Satou-san is a big idioooot~~~!”

Zena-san cries as she bolts out of the room.

Martha-chan only scratches her head and says, “Pardon me~ Please take your time~” before shutting the door.

—First time I hear someone say “indecent” in real life.

As if this weren’t any of my business…

“Goshujin-sama, can I get some clean cloth? Lulu seems to be on her period.”

I give her some cloth from the bag.

“Thanks. Shouldn’t you give chase? If you don’t hurry, she’ll be quite mad, you know?”

We’re just friends and not lovers though.

Still, I don’t want a friend to think of me as a lolicon, so let’s go clear the misunderstanding.

I can’t just run out half-naked like this, so I put on the shirt near my feet. I shouldn’t have to explain, but my pants were on the whole time.

Checking the radar, I see Zena-san running out the inn into Central Boulevard. As expected of a soldier, she is fast on her feet. In a few seconds, she will pass right in front of this room.

—This function is so convenient, it would be scary in the hands of a stalker.

While contemplating this pointless problem, I hop out the window just in the nick of time. [^window]

Then, blocking Zena-san’s way, I land carefully. I catch the startled Zena-san, and cancel the momentum with a dance-like spin.

>>> Skill obtained「Dancing」

“Zena-san, it’s not what it looks like.”

Zena-san has her hands on my chest trying to push me away in rejection. There’s no force behind it— Can’t let go now.

If I do, “unwilling to believe yet wanting to trust”— such a paradoxical maiden heart will surely react negatively.

“But, that cute girl was on the same bed with you!”

“She probably got on the wrong bed!”

Just sleeping on the same bed as a child is not a problem, okay?

My shorts stayed on the whole time yesterday too. I really want to scream out my innocence.

—I am not a lolicon!

“There was that black-haired girl too! Ooh, uh...”

“If you mean the older sister with bad sleeping habits, it seems to be that time of the month for her.”

It’s not really something you can say out loud, so I whisper into Zena-san’s ear.

Zena-san finally relaxes. [^stud]

“Bu-, but, men alway buy female slaves for nightly service, Lilio said!”

—Curse you, Lilio.

In my head, I yell at Lilio, who seems to be patrolling outside「Seiryuu City」right now.

As Zena-san’s guard and probably best bud, Lilio probably said that to protect her innocent friend, but enough with the baseless accusation!

“That’s not the case at all. I bought those sisters to serve as maids. Liza and the others do well as guards, but they can’t be sent on errands.”

“...But...”

Her mind understands, but is her heart still unconvinced?

If I blurt out “I would have bought mature women if I wanted to do that” right now, it would probably only anger her, so let’s drop it.

“Your outfit today is quite refreshing! All those frills give a clean yet elegant look. It really brings out your charm, Zena-san.”

In this case, I will muddle the issue by showering her with compliments.

Embarrassed, Zena answers, “But that’s… It’s just clothing…” yet she looks somewhat delighted.

“You look good, but this seems a bit thin. Don’t you feel cold?”

“No, it’s fine, because I have trained.”

That’s not the right line for a girl, Zena-san.

You have to grab the guys arm and say “I can stay warm like this, no?” to tease him!

“Right, that store over there sell pretty nice scarves. Why don’t we go see? I’m sure it will fit you, Zena-san.”

“Really? Let’s go see!”

Nice, I’ve changed the subject!

It’s the store Martha-chan went to on my first day in「Seiryuu City」.

Then, after comparing dozens of scarves and shawls, I buy the pink scarf Zena-san chose as a present for her.

Though there is a bit of back-and-forth before she accepts it, she cheered up by the time we leave the store.

...Women sure take a long time to shop, no?

Back at the inn with Zena, I see Arisa waving, standing some distance from the entrance. She seems to be in front of the carriage path leading to the courtyard.

“Welcome back, goshujin-sama. Seems like the misunderstanding is cleared. That’s good.”

Hearing her speak as if she wasn’t the cause of the problem, I give her a light flick on the forehead.

“Ow...”

“I’m back. What are you doing out here?”

“We were hungry, so I came to find Liza for some food.”

“Did everyone eat?”

“Yeah, Lulu is stll eating. Well, she doesn’t have much of an appetite...”

Right, it would be hard to digest cheese and smoked meat when she isn’t feeling well. I give Arisa several「Coppers」, asking her to buy some fruit for Lulu.

Meanwhile, I go back to the room to change.

Zena is waiting for me in the tavern on the first floor of the inn having a fruity drink.

Back in the room, I pour water from the「Bottomless Waterskin」into the bronze basin to wash my face. I don’t seem to have bed hair, so I merely put some water on it. When I have time, let’s look for hair gel in this world!

“Sorry for the wait, Zena-san”

“No, it’s fine. I was just chatting with Martha-san.”

After saying “I’ll be out of your hair now”, Martha-chan returns to work.

In her place, Arisa comes in from the entrance, and I have her go fetch Liza and the others.

Lulu doesn’t look well, so I let her stay in the room to rest. I also ask the young maid Yuni to bring water up to the room, giving her a couple of「Micro Coins」as the tip.

When Zena-san and I walk outside, Arisa has already brought Liza and everyone else.

“Use this money to buy some clothing and everyday items for everyone. Leave the haggling and calculating to Arisa. Liza, you make sure Arisa and the others don’t get pickpocketed or harassed by kidnappers.”

I hand a bag containing about ten「Silvers」to Liza. Another bag for Arisa has about two「Silvers」worth of change.

Since it’s dangerous to keep all the money together, I use the trick I learned from traveling abroad.

I agree to Arisa’s hushed request to grant her permission for using detection or concealing magic as a safety precaution. Oh yeah, I didn’t revoke the order after forbidding the use of magic last night.

“Pochi will guard too, no desu!”

“Tama too~?”

“Alright, you two stay near Arisa then.”

“Yes, nano desu!”

“Yea yea~”

I pet the enthusiastic Pochi and Tama.

Hmm, since they bathed every day in the citadel, their hair is smooth and clean unlike when we first met.

“Another thing. If you see the sorcerer who can use「Life Magic」, have her use cleaning magic on you.”

Saying that to Arisa and everyone else, I give them a couple more「Silvers」to pay for the「Life Magic」.

“Oh, goshujin-sama. Is it fine if we buy some snacks with the change?”

“One「Large Copper」at most. It’s almost lunchtime, so don’t get too much snacks.”

After energetically responding “Yeah~”, Arisa starts on a shortcut toward「Tepta Boulevard」.

With Pochi and Tama at her side, just like a neighborhood bully. Liza following behind them would be the parent.

“Seems like your slaves are easy to get along with, huh?”

“It might not be proper behavior for slaves, but it’s less stressful this way.”

If I’m serviced like a king in his palace, I’m confident I would become a

useless heap of trash, so I'm okay with this.

Judging by all the knowledge about about slaves Nidoren taught me, this should be within the acceptable range.

◆

"So are you on a break today?"

"Yeah, since we're finished with one stage of the dungeon survey, I have all of today off."

Zena-san answers merrily, but with only a half-day break before this after she escaped the dungeon, the working conditions seem more cruel than at a heartless corporation.

I won't say anything since she doesn't seem to mind, but I do worry about her over-exerting herself.

"Are you going back to your team tomorrow?"

"No, I'll have to hand things off to the new Dungeon Department. At the earliest, it will probably take five more days before getting back to County Patrol."

According to Zena-san, County Patrol may either go on a longer, two-to three-day excursions, or a short one-day patrol.

Teams with Arcane Soldiers are usually sent on longer trips, so we won't have many chances to meet once she goes back on her team.

—I remember now, Arisa said she wants to go to a dungeon.

"Zena-san, about the dungeon, can people who are not part of the army not enter right now?"

"Yes, seems like it will be closed for several months at least. You don't mean, there's someone you know who still hasn't come back?"

"Oh, no, that's not the reason. I was just asking out of curiosity. Sorry to make you worry."

Apparently, Arisa's wish won't be granted here.

For the beastgirls' situation too, how about going to the「Dungeon City」after I finish touring「Seiryuu City」?

It'll be sad to leave Zena-san here, but I can come back to visit!

"Satou-san, do you have any plans today?"

While contemplating such things, I answer Zena-san's question without much thought.

"Hmm, I want to head to to an all-round agency to ask them to find a house or lodging that can accommodate demi-humans. I can't keep letting Liza and the others stay in the stable, after all." [^nandemoya]

"Uh-, um, is it alright if I come along?"

Clutching her hands, Zena-san looks up anxiously.

"No problem, but are you really fine with using your vacation day on something like this?"

"Yes!"

Still, I don't think it would be any fun accompanying me on house-hunting... Since she is responding with such a bright smile, I won't push further.

With Zena-san on my side, we head to the All-Round Agency across the gateside plaza.

"Hello, is anyone here right now?"

Not seeing anyone on the first floor of the All-round Agency, I call out to the people inside.

I know people are on the second floor through the radar, so I was exactly as loud as I need to be. Thanks to the「Broadcast」skill I obtained, it doesn't hurt even if I yell loudly.

A soothing voice on the second floor yelling out "Coming!", then the sound of footsteps going down stairs.

Inside the All-Round Agency, there is a wooden reception counter near the entrance, with a set of sofas and a heavy-looking office desk further in.

Various documents are piled up on the sofa set table. It gives off the air of an old-school private investigator's office.

"Thank you for waiting. I am Nadi of the All-Round Agency."

The one who descended the stairs is a twenty-something woman with her red hair tied in a bun. She is wearing a white shirt, as well as a deep green skirt with suspenders.

"So, how may I help you today?"

"Yes, I would like you to help me find housing or lodging—"

I add on that I would like some place that will accept demi-human slaves

and is decently safe.

Preferably in a quiet area, but that's not as important as the first two.

"If you have demi-humans with you, it has to be the west side or the parts of the craftsmen sector that border it. The west side has safety concerns, so I don't recommend renting there."

Nadi-san says while going through a thick file on real estate.

I'm surprised she has files on this— it would be rude if I say it out loud.

"And what is your budget?"

"Let's see, I'm thinking around two「Silvers」. If that's not enough, anything under one「Gold」is acceptable."

"I have a few places in mind if that's the case."

At the slightly high-end「Gateside Inn」, the rate is one「Large Copper」per night, so accounting for the the number of people, I came up with two「Silver」budget.

I thought it would be more than enough, but Nadi-san's reaction seems to suggest that it is barely enough.

"These three properties, I think they fit your requirements. Only..."

Nadi-san hesitates before explaining.

Seems like all three are problematic.

Since I took the time to come, I'll let her show them to me before deciding whether to actually rent.

The first property. A two-floor house on 300 *tsubo*, whose previous owner was murdered by a criminal guild. With the vines covering the stone fence, my first impression is of a gloomy mansion. [^tsubo1]

Checking the three-dimensional floor plan on the map, I find a large hole on the wall, not visible from the front door.

I suppose that's where the killer broke in, and left it like that after the act.

Since it seems to be blocked by potted plants from the outside, I lead Nadi-san towards the hole while she is giving a tour of the interior— of course, I pretended to be lost.

At the second property, the rental carriage passes directly in front of the house without stopping. It's right in front of the road that leads to all the

brothels.

Just as Nadi-san start to explain, Zena-san stiffly orders the driver, “Please leave this place.”

The way she is lowering her reddish face is kinda cute.

The third property is a haunted, broken-down shack near the outer wall.

Once the house of a noble a century ago, this is the largest building among the three, yet I still wouldn’t want to live here.

Part of it is that I can’t stand horror and gore, but more importantly, a criminal guild has set up shop right under this mansion.

Hiding out within are mostly murders and other criminals with heinous records.

My guess, they are here to wait out the storm, and spread the rumors of ghost sightings.

—Huh?

The dots on the radar are behaving oddly. They have gone past the mansion’s range.

Incredulously checking the「Map」, I discover a tunnel that leads out of the city. Maybe it has been there since the noble’s time. It must be a route for smuggling.

I stop Zena-san who is about to enter.

“The atmosphere here feels eerie. Let’s not go in. It could be cursed.”

Hearing me say that, Zena-san’s face shows surprise. Yeah, it sounds nothing like what someone who had been through a dungeon infested with skeleton monsters would say.

“Did you know that if there are any ghosts or other undead monsters, you can donate to a temple and ask them to perform an exorcism?”

Nadi-san suggests a solution true to this Fantasy world, but even if I ask priests to come, the criminals would just hide underground.

Let’s write an anonymous tip later, and alert the guard office.

Surely, the skill「Covert Operation」will come in handy.

◆

In the end, none of the properties we visited were satisfactory, so the tour ended there.

“—If your budget is two「Silvers」per decade, there must be other options. I’ll visit the merchant's guild this afternoon to see if there are some nice properties.”

If Nadi-san is that confident, I’ll come to the All-round Agency again in the evening.

I thought their prices were two「Silvers」per day, but apparently rent is calculated per decade— every ten days.

Right, I really should have made it clear.

Since there’s not much to do until the evening, I ask Zena-san if there’s anywhere she wants to go. The restaurant before needs reservation, so it’s probably not an option today.

Seeing Zena-san at a loss for words, Nadi-san gives a recommendation.

“The plaza up ahead has been hosting a flea market since yesterday! There’s a lot of unexpectedly good deals, so the owner and I would usually go pick up cheap goods on the last day.”

Hearing Nadi-san add “It’s a great place for a date!”, Zena-san blushes hard.

Since we have the time, I decide to go see the flea market with Zena-san before going back.

According to Nadi-san, the flea market has an outdoor stage performing the ever-so-popular romantic drama “Tragedy at the March of Mouno”. [^march]

Since the flea market will be crowded, I decrease the range of the radar while enlarging the display, showing me every movement within five meters. This way, I can clearly tell whoever comes close.

“Goshujin-sama, nano desu!”

“Found you~?”

Pochi and Tama tackle my waist.

Behind them stand Liza and Arisa.

“Oh? Where are the things you bought?”

“They were pretty heavy, so we brought them back to the inn already!

Look, look!”

Taking off her hoodie and handing it to Liza, Arisa does an in-place spin.

Her peach-yellow skirt fan out, revealing her thighs, but a child’s legs holds no allure at all.

They probably bought new clothes on「Tepta Boulevard」.

Pochi and Tama also open up their hoodie, and show me their new outfits. Tama is in a cute frilly pink dress; Pochi in a white shirt and yellow skirt similar to Martha-chan’s style; and Liza in a sturdy-looking military-esque outfit. Pants are worn under the skirts.

Pochi and Tama want to imitate Arisa and show off with a spin, but since the crowd is getting thicker, Liza stops them.

“All of you look cute!”

While placing my hands on Pochi and Tama’s hooded heads, I praise them.

I’m not being polite, they really are cute.

“Oh, and the wig?”

“Ehehe~ It’s to hide my ominous hair.”

Yeah, Arisa is sporting a blonde wig.

Obviously, it’s meant to hide her purple hair.

“It’s fine, right?”

“Yeah, of course.”

To avoid trouble, this is a necessary expense.

“Also, there’s something I want~”

Arisa presses her flat chest against me, and looks up with puppy eyes.

“Don’t stick to me. What do you need?”

I pull Arisa away, and ask what she wants.

Zena-san’s questioning gaze hurts a lot. I’d be troubled if Pochi and Tama start imitating.

After making sure Zena-san doesn’t mind, I go check out what Arisa wants to buy. I am brought to a stall where karuta-esque cards are displayed. [^karuta]

With the young owner’s permission I pick one up to see.

The front has drawings of things like “Well” or “Bucket”, while the back has the corresponding words in Shiga language.

The drawings are black and white, but by emphasizing the characteristics of the drawn objects, they're easily distinguishable. The card for "water" is a little intelligible, but that seems to be one of the few exceptions.

One set contains a hundred of these cards, each hand-drawn with much care.

They seem to be suitable for teaching Pochi and Tama how to read.

"Quite interesting cards."

"It's my own idea! It was originally meant to teach the kids in my hometown how to read."

He explains that he originally used charcoal to draw on scrap lumber. When he realized he can sell them, he commissioned an artist he knew to craft an entire set, planning on making a pitch to the merchant's guild.

However, they were unable to reach a deal on the production cost and selling price, so the pitch failed. Each set costs four「Silvers」to produce, yet the guild thought it was only worth one.

"Every one of these cards are hand-drawn?"

"Yes, that is a given..."

If he can make block printings, wouldn't the cost go down a lot?

Just as I am about to make the suggestion, Arisa pulls on my hand to stop me. She puts a finger to her lips.

"What?"

"You're going to suggest block printing, no?"

Arisa speaks with a hushed tone, so I play along and also whispher.

"What's wrong with that?"

"I have never seen block printing during my time in the castle. It's dangerous to carelessly spread around technology, you know?"

"There are stamps, but not block printing?"

"That is what technology is like."

I vaguely remember that in Earth's history, more than a millenium passed between the appearance of the first stamps and the invention of the printing press. Applying the techniques of one field to another probably takes a long time.

I do wonder why the Transmigrators and Translocators who came to this world before me never promoted the printing press or block printing.

Arisa has experienced failure on this front before, so let's listen to her warning and forget about block printing.

The hushed talk ends here, and I turn to the young owner again.

"Sorry, the subject seems to be too dry for her."

"I should be the one apologizing. Not many people are interested..."

Too few people are interested? I thought it would be a hot buy.

"We'll buy one set. How much?"

His gloomy expression lightening somewhat, he suggests four「Silvers」for the set— Isn't that his cost?

"Is it really fine? Don't you make no profit from this?"

"It's fine. I just want my customers to understand what's good about my product."

His depressed mannerism is a little too much to bear.

It's a waste that such a great idea might go up in smoke.

"What do you plan on improving for the next batch? Since there seems to be some demand, the issue must be the cost. Maybe look for a cheap material, or develop a low-cost production method? Trial and error is an enjoyable process!"

As I'm paying for the cards, I say something unnecessary… It's fine to just give advice, right?

After seeing some light return to the young owner's eyes, we leave the store.

I give the flash cards we bought to Arisa.

"What else do you want to buy?"

"Just some small things. If they're within budget, would a sewing kit and a hand mirror be fine?"

"Yeah, whatever you need as long as it's within budget— Well, you can go over with the hand mirror."

Since it's too much trouble to use the water in the basin to check out my reflection every time, I actually do want one of those.

There are "broken mirrors" among the loot from「Dragon's Canyon」, but they're too dangerous to use normally.

Separating from everyone else who are going to keep shopping, I prepare

to take Zena-san to the Theater, but Arisa calls after me.

“Goshujin-sama, are you going to watch the outdoor play?”

“Yeah, that’s the plan.”

“In that case, have you bought the tickets at the market entrance?”

“No, haven’t.”

So they’re selling tickets over there?

Since there are a lot of people, we could probably get in by going with the crowd.

“I heard from Lilio, we can just pay one「Micro」when we enter.”

“That works too, but you’d have to stand at the back! The tickets are two「Coppers」each, but you can sit down to watch.”

“It costs ten times more just for a seat?”

Despite Zena-san’s surprise, I think it’s more like standing is much cheaper.

I’m not sure how long the play is, so getting seats is probably better.

Since Arisa and everyone else want to go see it too, we’ll buy six tickets in all— As I announce this, Liza volunteers to go buy the tickets for everyone.

After giving the twelve「Coppers」in a bag to Liza, we start toward the outdoor stage, while looking around the flea market.

I feel a little sorry for Zena-san, but just like that, we browse the market with third wheels in tow.

I did try apologizing to Zena-san about it, but seeing her joyously looking at the stalls holding Pochi and Tama’s hands, she doesn’t seem to mind at all. Even so, let’s not forget to appease her again later. [^pets]

The quality of the items sold at the stalls in this flea market varies a lot.

Mixed among some seemingly low-cost bone accessories, there turn out to be some cute silver earings.

“These go quite well with your blond hair!”

“—They’re nice.”

Zena-san happily puts them by her ears asking “Look good?” while I answer with praise.

Next to us, Arisa claims that she wants something too, so I get her a

ribbon from the next stall over.

Of course, not just Arisa, everyone gets one, including Lulu who's resting back at the inn.

Zena-san puts down the earrings reluctantly. If she would ask directly like Arisa did, I would have an excuse to buy them for her.

While Arisa and the others run to the next store holding Zena-san's hand, I take this chance to buy the earrings. They'll be a present for her on the way back!

After meeting up with Liza who has bought the tickets, I get her a tassle for her spear as thanks.

At every store, I can buy at prices much lower than what's suggested by the「Evaluation」skill. It could be because this is a flea market, or maybe it's due to the effect of the「Negotiation」and「Haggling」skills.

On the way to the outdoor stage, we ran into pickpockets and scoundrels twice. Since the「Radar」will alert me about the approach of anyone with ill-intent, they were quickly disposed.

After tying up the criminals, we left them to the brawny men patrolling the area, hired by the organizer of the flea market.

It's fine to deal with these criminals using harsh methods, but we had to be a little more careful with the men trying to hit on Zena-san.

Still, before they can even put a hand on Zena-san, either Liza or I would brush them away, physically.

◆

"O fair maiden! I wish to admire your smile under the brilliant sun, not under moonlight!"

"Yes, Zen, my love. Please use your magic to whisk me away from this cage-like castle!"

On the stage, an actor in a magician's robe is conveying his love to the black-haired actress in a dress. Their passionate acting really outshines the shabby full moon stage prop.

...Zen, huh? After meeting Arisa, I can't help but think about the kanji

whenever I see a potentially Japanese name. With Zen, it could be either “禅” or “善”.

I don’t care much for tragedy, so while I tune out the play, I think about various things.

On the other hand, Arisa and Zena-san probably enjoy this genre, as both of them are leaning forward, absorbed in the story.

Since this tragic romance is based on a true story, the characters are somewhat complex. Unable to keep up with such a story, Pochi and Tama started napping on my lap.

Although Liza is facing the stage at full attention, she isn’t really watching the play, but focusing on the smell of kebabs coming from the direction of the stage.

Every time the fragrance of grilled chicken is carried over by the wind, without fail, her eyes would narrow as if having found prey.

While I tease the napping Pochi and Tama by pinching thier noses, the play continues on stage.

“I have you at last! As a mere commoner magician, you dare kidnap Princess Lilutiana, the fiancée of I, Marquess Mouno! Your crime is unforgivable!”

A scene where an chubby actor, apparently portraying the Marquess, and his knights have cornered our protagonists.

Our hero stands on a cliff, as indicated by the props, bravely raising up his staff to protect the heroine. For some reason, a woman in a servant outfit is behind the two.

—This servant lady is probably an important flag!

The chubby actor waves his hand dramatically at the end of his line, and background hidden behind black curtains is revealed.

“Eek!”

“Ugh!”

Zena-san and Arisa suddenly shrink back, each grabbing one of my arms.

The background depicts people being executed on the guillotine.

It seems a bit distasteful, but judging by the cheers and gasps coming from the crowd, people actually like it.

This city really has a high tolerance for violence.

“Father! Mother! Accursed Marquess, you even laid your hands on my younger siblings and relatives!”

“You have no right to be angry! You are a commoner rebelling against I, the Marquess. It’s only natural that a rebel’s family would be executed! You should be thankful for me graciously sparing them from torture!”

Red liquid drips down our hero’s eyes— How does that work?

The hero’s magic summons a violent gale, blowing the knights guarding the Marquess to the side of the stage.

Of course, it’s not real magic, but a simple stage effect created through props and background music, but the audience still cheers.

Since there are real magicians in this world, I wish they’d use real Light or Wind magic in the performance.

“Bastard, you don’t deserve to command those knights! Well, no one can protect you now. I shall carry out vengeance for my family!”

The hero raises his staff.

Then just as expected, the woman playing the servant makes her move.

Intentionally facing the audience, she slowly draws her hidden sword.

The audience tries to warn the hero “Watch out!” Yeah, I know the feeling.

Zena doesn’t make a sound, but seems to be deeply invested in the story. Her grip on my arm is getting tighter. It’s starting to hurt.

Obviously, the hero cannot hear the audience, and continues toward the actor playing the Marquess while chanting his spell.

At that moment, the servant actress runs up and stabs the hero in the back.

“Curse you! You were on the Marquess’s side!”

“It’s because the princess deserves someone better than you!”

Despite being stabbed, the hero admonishes the servant actress with a clear voice. And when he finishes his line, he dramatically keels over in pain.

Finally, the heroine runs to the hero’s side.

“My sword was coated with the deadly poison extracted from a wyvern’s tail. No one can save him.”

The servant says to the audience in exposition.

The heroine is huddled over the suffering hero, unable to stop crying.

“My love, let us meet again in the next life—”

“Aah, Zen!”

The hero kicks the bucket.

“Your highness, let us return to the Marquess.”

“Never! I belong to Zen. The Marquess shall never have me!”

The heroine screams, then stabs herself with the sword that had killed Zen.

The audience— especially the female crowd— exclaims out of their emotional investment in the heroine.

Pochi and Tama are spooked by this sound, panickingly looking around, but I quietly assure them, “It’s just cheering for the play”.

The two of them immediately put their heads back down on my lap. As I scratch the back of their ears, I look back to the stage.

I was told that this is a tragic romance, but the plot is really beyond help.

I thought this was the end, but there is apparently more.

The body of the hero left on the cliff has come back as an Undead, taking revenge on the Marquess’s family one after another.

Just as the servant once again stabs the hero’s chest with the poisoned short sword, the hero exclaims “That poison is useless against my undead body!” and returned the favor, cleverly mirroring that scene in the first half. How interesting.

But, in the very end, just as the hero is about to succeed in his revenge against the Marquess, a paladin suddenly appears and defeats him, completely out of nowhere.

Apparently, more than a few people agree with me, as the audience begins to boo.

Some seem to be booing with a smile. Seems like deriding the Marquess and the Paladin during this scene is an unspoken rule.

Oh, it’s not over?

“My life ends here! However, I shall take this land with me! I「Curse」thee, Marquess Mouno!”

Black smoke blasts out from under the hero, and when it clears, the background has become a scene of ruin.

“O Paladin! I can’t stand to see mine citizens suffering in my stead. For them, I’m willing to do anything!”

“Ooh, what a noble resolve! As expected of the head of the Mouno House that has existed since the time of Our Founder Yamato-sama!”

I feel like the Marquess suddenly did a 180. The Paladin too, for praising him without reserve.

At last, the play finally ends on this note: “the Marquess sacrifices himself to cancel the「Curse」on the march”.

After the play ends, Arisa, who had been watching intently, says she is thirsty, so I give her some juice and let her rest in the shade.

“Zena-san, here’s yours.”

“Thank you.”

After thanking me, Zena-san takes the clay cup and downs it in one go.

Like I thought, Zena-san was quite thirsty too.

Liza, who went with me to buy drinks, also hands Pochi and Liza cups of juice.

I’m a little hungry, so I go to a nearby stall selling something like flatbread.

The smell of soy sauce on the grill attracted me. This is gabo flatbread, apparently made with the Fantasy vegetable gabo berry. The price is only one「Micro」for two, quite cheap.

They come in two flavors, plain and green onion with soy sauce, and I get one of each. The crowd after the play ended had bought all the food, and left not a single one ready.

The thin, okonomiyaki-like pancake from the neighboring stall looks good too, so I also put in several orders. They’re called “Krups”, which I have never heard of. [^okonomiyaki]

While I’m waiting, a middle-aged woman also waiting for her Krups makes conversation. She was sitting right in front of us.

“Oh, weren’t you the one sitting behind me? Are you a foreigner?”

“That’s right. I’m the traveling merchant, Satou.”

“My, aren’t you polite—”

After introducing herself, in order to kill time waiting on the Krups to be ready, she explains to me why the play came to have such a disastrous

ending.

“That play just now, wasn’t the ending quite ridiculous?”

“You mean how the paladin came out of nowhere, and the Marquess had changed character?”

“Yes, the truth is—”

According to her, when this play was written twenty years ago, the original ending had the Magician successfully taking revenge on the Marquess before being defeated by the Paladin. But due to opposition from nobles, the ending changed to the current one.

What’s more, Princess Lilutiana was originally just a commoner, and the conflict began when the nefarious Marquess tried to snatch her away after her marriage.

—I see, so the story was later twisted and that led to those weird developments, huh.

When the flatbread and Krups are ready, I thank her and return to where everyone else are.

“What did you buy?”

“Original and green onion Gabo flatbread, and something called Krups.”

Everone reaches curiously for the sliced Gabo flatbread.

Zena-san declines with a bitter smile, so I take a piece myself like everyone else.

—Bitter!

It’s so bitter, every time I bite down there’s a strange vomit-inducing taste.

Maybe it’s acceptable for locals who are used to this, but not me. I turn on「Pain Resistance」, hold my breath, and swallow.

I take a sip of the juice to flush my palate.

When I feel alive again, I look around, seeing the beastgirls eating normally but with odd expressions, and Arisa chewing with a teary face.

“Arisa, if it’s too bitter, spit it out here.”

“Thanks, this is impossible for me.”

Taking my handkerchief, Arisa quickly disposes of what’s in her mouth.

Speaking of which, Zena-san did warn me “Gabo berry is disgusting”. The smell was covered by the soy sauce so I got careless.

On the other hand, the Krups taste pretty good.

It looks like a more thoroughly cooked thin okonomiyaki, but the dressing is not Worcestershire sauce but miso, so maybe it's best to treat it as an entirely different dish.

While we much on the Krups under the shade, we excitely chat about the play.

"That series of classic blood-pumping scenes really took my breath away~"

"Seeing Princess Lilutiana take her own life right after Zen the Magician died almost made me cry."

Zena-san wipes her slightly reddish eyes.

"Eh~ when that happened, she should have kept the sword and taken revenge on the Marquess! When she died, everything's over for her."

While stuffing her cheeks with Krup, Arisa retorts Zena-san.

"It's crunchy and tough nano desu!"

"Delicious~?"

"What kind of stock did they use? There's a hint of meat."

On the other hand, the three beastgirls are focused not on the play but the Krups.

"In my opinion, the Marquess who tried to break up the lovers is to blame for everything, no?"

"But, since Princess Lilutiana rejected the fiancé her family decided, didn't the tragedy start from there?"

Perhaps due to the differences in Arisa and Zena-san's values, their tones are becoming more emotional.

Arisa's "Love trumps everything" and Zena-san's "A noblewoman should marry for the good of her house" are clashing against each other.

"In that case! Zena-tan, you mean rather than mine goshujin-sama, you would be willing to marry the fiancé your family decides on?"

"...I-, I don't have a fiancé though."

Against Arisa's question, Zena-san mutters weakly.

Well, Zena-san and I aren't even lovers, and I won't even consider her an option before four or five years have passed.

"Could it be, you joined the army to avoid getting a fiancé? After all, like in

every neighboring country, resignation is impossible until five years after enlistment.”

Arisa sure knows a lot.

“What does resignation have to do with having a fiancé? Soldiers can still get married, no?”

“Women here have to stay home after marriage.”

I see, so it would be impossible to get married during the five years in service. Until it’s almost time for retirement, no one will bother her with the subject, huh.

High-class nobles are another story, but as a low-class noble, Zena-san probably doesn't need to make such a decision so urgently.

“As a woman, if you don't have the resolve to give up everything for the one you love, you wouldn’t be able to love anyone!”

“But, I can't ignore the House’s wishes either...”

“If you play the good girl any more, someone might steal away your love!”

Arisa has gone a little overboard, I think, so I lightly flick Arisa’s foreheat to stop the bickering.

“You’ve gone too far.”

I understand Arisa’s feeling, but she can’t force Japanese values onto a country with a completely different culture.

I apologize to the teary Zena-san, and I make Arisa do so as well.

She was a little reluctant, but still says “Sorry” to Zena-san in the end. She is surprisingly frank.

>>> Skill obtained「Mediation」

>>> Title obtained「Mediator」

Perhaps thinking we are arguing, Pochi and Tama are becoming restless.

“Do you want more Krups? Or, how about the kebabs over there?”

“Kebab~?”

“Krups are tasty, but kebabs are better no desu!”

“Allow me to go purchase them— goshujin-sama?”

I merely suggested to ease the tension, but the beastgirls quickly react.

Especially Liza, who has already gotten up to go to the kebab stand.

—She’s way too fast.

I give the money to Liza and tell her, “Get one for each person.” Arisa leaves with Liza after declaring “Leave haggling to me!”.

“Together~?”

“I’ll help nano desu!”

Pochi and Tama also get up to go along.

After struggling with the tough, sinewy kebab, Zena-san finally relaxes her expression, but seems to still be bothered by Arisa’s words.

—--

[^Curse]: The kanji of the skill「Curse」actually reads “Coercion”.
[^window]: Uh, wasn’t the window too small to even fit his head? I don’t think they changed rooms… Ehhhh, as they say in Japan, 気にしたら負け.
[^stud]: I don’t think Zena relaxed because she trusted him. Remember, Satou has her in his arms, and is whispering into her ear. I think he could make up any excuse here and she would just melt.
[^nandemoya]: A *nandemoya* (何でも屋), a business that would fulfill any kind of request for a fee.

[^tsubo1]: About 1,000 square meters or a quarter of an acre.
[^march]: A march is the territory of a marquess. Also, a marquess is one rank above a count.

[^karuta]: [*Karuta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karuta) (from Portuguese “carta”) are Japanese playing cards. One type of these cards has illustrations on one side, and corresponding phrases on the other. Trivia: *Uta-karuta*, a type of card pick-up pame, is the focus of the anime *Chihayafuru*.
[^pets]: Moral of the story, as long as there are really cute pets, girls don’t mind if you bring third wheels to the date.
[^okonomiyaki]: [Okonomiyaki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okonomiyaki) is a Japanese savory pancake.

(with tl notes)

Death March 2-4 w/ TLN

Volume 2 Chapter 4:【Attackers at Gateside】

-Translator: MiaoMix [Comments will be in Pink]

-Editor: Options [Comments will be in Blue]

>> Satou here. Ants are used to describe diligent workers, but with white ants (termites), it can only mean trouble when they start working. In this world, there seem to be even more troublesome ants... <<

On the way back to「Gateside Inn」, we run into county soldiers who have just returned from patrol.

"Ahh, Zena-chi!"

"Lilio! Iona-san and Lou too!"

Zena-san's three guards come over after roll call on the「Gateside Plaza」.

Perhaps having battled another wyvern, Miss Iona and other armored soldiers have all sorts of scratches on their equipment.

The tall woman named Lou is also missing one of her shoulder pads.

Running up to them, Zena-san hurriedly starts chanting「Wind Magic」healing spells.

"Goshujin-sama, we'll go ahead to set down the luggage."

"Yes, please."

Arisa and the beastgirls separate in front of the inn, then respectively head to the room and the stable.

In place of Zena-san who is busy chanting her spell, I chat with Lilio and others.

“You look quite exhausted! Did you fight another wyvern?"

“If wyverns show up that often, I would have quit the army long ago.”

Lilio sighs and shakes her head. A gesture that would mean no different in Japan.

“Today, we fought with ant monsters called「Large Fang Ants」.”

“Man, those rat bastards! I’ll turn them into kebabs the next time I see them!”

Miss Iona tries to explain for Lilio, but the tall Lou makes it more confusing.

Ants or rats, which one was it?

“Before we ran into the group of「Large Fang Ants」, we discovered ratman (Ratman is the only beastkin race so far with furigana that dictates how what they’re called, so I conceded to the author in this instance. I will still translate the others as “whatever-kin” unless otherwise noted.) knights trespassing upon the county. Lou is angry because she thinks the ratmen lured the「Large Fang Ants」here.”

Seeing confusion on my face, Miss Iona adds.

I see, the ratmen had led a Monster Train here. (A “Monster Train” is where players purposely (or mistakenly) lures a mass of monsters around the map in an MMO.) If this goes on,「Seiryuu County」and the ratmen might start a war.

But, is it really fine to tell an outsider about this? Maybe the discipline here isn’t as strict, or maybe the「Shiga Kingdom」doesn’t see intelligence control as important.

“The bright red helmet bastard at the front of their team, I’ll make sure he gets the gallows next time I meet him!”

As if to appease Lilio, Zena-san casts her healing「Wind Magic」spell.

“Thank you, Zena-chi.”

“You’re welcome.”

After responding to Lilio and the others with a smile, Zena-san goes to heal the other wounded.

“Noo—!”

A young girl’s scream can be heard from the inn’s courtyard.

—Shit, I haven’t reset the range of the「Radar」.

The voice was Yuni-chan’s. She probably found a snake or something, but I should still go check on her.

For some reason, Lilio and the others follow me.

“Got prey~”

“Goshujin-sama! Praise us, nano desu!”

Tama runs to me with something raised over her head with both hands. Pochi is running behind her and holding a wooden stick in one hand.

Seeing that, Lilio and the others unsheath their swords at the same time.

In the face of sudden hostility, Pochi and Tama stop dead in their tracks.

“No need to worry, it’s already dead.”

I tell the three raising their swords what I confirmed through the AR, then ask Tama what happened.

“What’s with that ant?”

Yes, the prey that Tama brought over is the carcass of a「Flying Ant」.

“Defeated~?”

“It was on top of a wagon and attacked no desu!” (Small point about Pochi’s grammar. I think I mentioned it in Volume 1 Chapter 5, but here’s a reminder: After certain clauses (for example, い-adjectives), it would be incorrect to use the “な” particle, so she will drop it. I will leave it alone as I think the small variation in her speech pattern adds to her charm.)

The two wave their hand around to answer my question.

The carcass they set down is full of dents apparently made by a blunt weapon, and on the head has a hole probably punctured by Liza’s spear.

“Goshujin-sama, there don’t seem to be anymore monsters around.”

Liza comes to report, her spear propped up on her shoulder. Behind her stands Yuni-chan.

Probably having been spooked, Yuni-chan is gripping Liza’s coat with her small, shaking hand.

Hmm, the species is slightly different, but was this one missed by the county soldiers?

The「Radar」range is too small, so I open the「Map」to reveal the forest beyond the main gate.

—Red. The numerous dots indicating enemies are approaching from deep within the forest.

“Pochi, Tama, go get your short swords. Arisa, bring Lulu down here. Liza, go get the tent that was used as a bed cover.”

“Yes, nano desu!”

“Aye!”

“Okay~”

“Yes, sir.”

The four starts moving as soon as I give the order. I thought Arisa would want to know the reason, but like the beastgirls, she just jumps into action.

My actions probably seem out of nowhere, so Miss Iona asks suspiciously

“What’s the matter?”

“This Flying Ant, it can’t be acting alone. I’m afraid there might be more. You should send at least several riders out to check—”

Overshadowing the seemingly believable excuse I’ve made with the「Deception」skill, one of the towers on the wall cuts off my sentence with an alarm.

They probably saw the ants approaching.

After hearing the alarm, Zena-san and other soldiers all run to their respective captains.

The Madam and Martha-chan look out from the inn with uneasy faces. Yuni-chan had turned to hug my leg after Liza left, and I usher her towards them.

According to the「Map」data, the「Flying Ants」are only about Level 3. Individually, they’re weaker than fully-equipped county soldiers. About as strong as the average adult.

Only, these「Flying Ants」all have sharp claws and exoskeletons tougher than normal ants. What’s more, they can fly. They seem fairly dangerous for the average citizen.

The best scenario is to burn them with the spell「Fire Shot」while they’re still in the air, outside the city. But the flying speed of these monsters is

much faster than I expected, as many of the ants have gotten to the city wall in my brief hesitation.

The ants are flying right past the city wall, but like birds suddenly encountering glass, they then turn back toward the other side.

Some were unable to turn in time, crashing into something above the wall and falling off. The ants that didn't crash can't seem to accelerate, and are shot down by the archers as they slowed.

—What was that?

"The monster deflection barrier on the city wall seems to be working."

As if predicting the question in my mind, Arisa explains, already having brought Lulu downstairs.

"Barrier? But they passed right through?"

"This isn't「Space Magic」. If they set up a constant physical barrier, it would waste too much mana."

I remember the「Dragon's Canyon」Barrier having physical resistance… No, this isn't the time.

"Arisa, take Lulu inside the tavern to hide. That place has stone walls on three sides, so it should be safe.

I'll let Pochi and Tama guard the entrance."

I order Arisa, and also have Pochi and Tama stand at the entrance when they come back with their short swords. Then using some tables and the tarp Liza brought here, I make a barricade for in case the ants get in.

"Pochi and Tama, I'll leave the entrance to you."

"Yes nano desu!"

"And goshujin-sama~?"

"I'll be clearing the monsters that come close to the inn with Liza."

People working outside the city are now running inside. Some seem to have already been hurt.

The county soldiers stand in formation at the front gate. Zena-san is casting a defensive spell against air attacks, but it's taking a while likely because of the sheer size.

After the dogkin slave carrying a large basket has gotten inside, the front gate begins to close.

Like a rude commuter trying to get on a train that's about to depart, an ant

lodges itself into the gap of the nearly closed front gate.

“There’s only one, crush it with the gate!”

From within the Guard Office, the voice of Sir Soun orders the guards.

However, there is no longer just one.

During the brief moment the gate paused, one by one the ants pile onto the gap, wedging open the gate— in the end, the ants have successfully broken into the city.

With Zena-san now at their side, the Patrol team that had just returned engage the ants.

Ants that try to take flight after entering the city are struck down by Zena-san’s「Fallen Hammer」while Lilio and the guards shoot down any that avoided the spell with their crossbows.

Under the threat of Zena-san’s magic and crossbows, the ants stop trying to fly.

Turning into a ground battle is in the county soldiers’ favor, but there are still too many ants.

Dozens of ants get past the soldiers and begin to attack Liza and me. Of course, the nearby shops are also under attack.

“Goshujin-sama, allow me.”

Liza swings her black spear against the swarm of ants. Stab, sweep, slam— like that, she forces back the ants with devastating momentum.

Some low-flying ants try to go for the horses in the courtyard, but I blast through them by flicking「Micro Coins」.

—Hmm, not enough of a hook.

If I practice a little more, I can probably even hit enemies behind obstacles.

While I am developing unnecessary little tricks, I get careless about covering Liza, and several ants approach the「Gateside Inn」.

“You shall not pass no desu!” (She literally says “ここは通さないのです！”, while Gandalf’s famous line is translated as “ここは通さぬぞ！”) “Entry Prohibited~?”

Blocking the ants trying to attack the inn, Pochi and Tama stand in their way.

The folks inside the inn scream as they see the ants get closer.

“Hah, nano desu!”

Pochi raises the short sword resting on her waist and assaults the first ant, defeating it in one hit.

Seeing Pochi stop her movements, the remaining ants on both sides swing down their claws—

“Getting careless~?”

Hopping onto Pochi’s back, Tama blocks the ants’ attacks with her short sword and buckler.

“Tama, thanks nano desu!”

“Just doin' what 'ah can~?” (The text says “なんくるないさ”, an Okinawan idiom. [Nico Nico Pedia] (http://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%81%AA%E3%82%93%E3%81%8F%E3%8 states that it comes from “真(まくとぅ)そーけーなんくるないさ”, meaning “Do the best one can, and leave the rest to chance”.)

Why Okinawan slang— wait, that wasn't Arisa?

When the ants pull back their claws, Tama takes the chance to jump into the air, stabbing her short sword into the head of one ant.

Meanwhile, crouching down from the downward force, Pochi hugs the ground and thrusts upwards, piercing the other ant’s jaw.

The inn erupts in a deafening cheer for the tiny warriors who took down three ants in the blink of an eye.

In less than half an hour, the ants in「Gateside Plaza」have mostly been eradicated.

There were several more close calls like with Pochi, but every time the situation is defused as the ants stop unnaturally in their tracks, then turn

over and die, bleeding from their eyes and mouths.

Probably Arisa's「Mind Magic」. I see her making peace signs with her tiny hands.

Anyway, I saw a few ants run inside Nadi-san's「All-Round Agency」. Nadi-san will probably be fine hiding in the basement, but I should still go help her out.

"Liza, I'll leave this to you for a moment."

"Yes, sir!"

As if to prove her determined response, Liza takes down two ants with one strike of her black spear.

I dance around an ant coming at me and run toward the「All-Round Agency」.

Inside the「 All-Round Agency」, I take out an「Iron Bar」from「Storage」, after making sure I'm hidden from view. It isn't a mace, but actually the handle of some sort of weapon.

I could just kick them, but I pick out something that's better suited as a weapon indoors. If I use the「Magic Gun」, it'll be hard to cover up the evidence after taking down the monsters, and the inside of store will be shot full of holes!

I exterminate the ants that try to attack me with the「Iron Bar」.

>>> Skill obtained:「One-Handed Blunt Weapon」.

Speaking of which, I haven't gotten a blunt weapon-related skill before.

I don't plan on using one as my main weapon, so I will leave it alone to save skill points.

Two ants are gathered at the wooden door leading to the basement, and I quickly dispose of them with the「Iron Bar」.

Pulling the dead ants aside, I see the door already battered. Just in the nick of time.

I can tell Nadi-san is unhurt from her status displayed on the「Map」, but I call out to reassure her.

"Nadi-san, are you alright?"

"Y-, yes, I'm alright!"

The stairs to the basement are dyed yellow from the acid spat out by the ants. Unfortunately, I don't have anything that can neutralize the acid.

If I line the floor with gold coin, they shouldn't be dissolved by the acid, but that will be the backup plan. (So rich he can line the floor with gold... (Options: He is making it hail!) Anyway, the important thing to know here is that gold is usually resistant to most acids except aqua regia.)

Well, let's try grinding up rocks in「Storage」, and covering the stairs with it...

Before I can actually do so, a small figure runs in.

"Nadi!"

"Boss!"

A teenage boy. He has long green hair tied in a single braid behind him like a character in a Kung Fu flick and is wearing a plain tunic and pants. If there is anything out of the usual, it would be the strange pointy hat on his head? (For some reason, I'm imagining *Übel Blatt*'s Köinzell, with a pointy hat. (from the description it should correct))

"■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■「Ivy Control」."

With his magic, the ivy that served as decoration begins to move like tentacles, reaching into the basement.

Soon, Nadi-san is brought up by the vines.

Amazing. That is true Fantasy magic.

"Thank you very much, Satou-san! And Boss, too."

"Afterthought?"

"No, I really am thankful!"

Nadi-san gives the boy of few words and me each a thank-you kiss on the cheeks.

"Who?"

"He requested us to look for housing, and he just saved my life! If Satou-san hadn't come, I would have been eaten by the ants before you got here, Boss."

The boy turns around, and thanks me by saying only the word "Grateful". So terse, it makes me wonder if he's really being sincere in his gratitude.

Seeing what the「AR」displays about him, I can't help but look surprised.

He is of the most famous race in all of Fantasy— an Elf.

◆

“Is something wrong, Satou-san?”

“E-, uh, I’ve never seen green hair before.”

I was going to blurt out「Elf」, but I stop myself and go with his hair color instead.

“Ahh, that’s because Boss is an「Elf」, a fairy (No, not the tiny ones with butterfly wings. The term used here is “妖精 *yousei*”. Broadly speaking, “fairies” can refer to all kinds of mythical races.) of the forest. Cool, no?”

“Elf, huh? With long ears?”

“Hmph, wrong.”

Hearing my words, the Manager turns his face away like an upset kid.

Despite acting like a child, this Manager is actually already 280 years old.

His name is Yusalatoya Boruënan (That isn’t a Germanic umlaut, but a trema used to indicate that the vowel needs to be pronounced separately, like in “Noël” or “naïve”.). As later explained, rather than a family name,「Boruënan」is actually the forest where he lived, and all「Elves」who lived there bear this name.

“Sheesh, Boss— What you’re talking about is the「Long Ear Tribe」(The furigana says “ブーチ” and I have no idea what it refers to. (Options: It can be read as “booch”. I believe it’s just a slang term for people with long sacks on their ear, or so I heard from my friends.)), Satou-san. The race with long, horizontal ears like bamboo leaves, right?”

While pacifying the Manager, Nadi-san confirms with me.

I nod in agreement.

“Ever since the First Hero and Founder of the Saga Empire called the「Long Ear Tribe」「Elves」, there have been people who confuse the two, even after a thousand years.”

I see, even the First Hero got it wrong...

Surely, just like me, the First Hero must have been influenced by that classic Fantasy work, set on a “cursed island” (The reference is [*Record of Lodoss War*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Record_of_Lodoss_War), the famous, Dungeons & Dragons-inspired Japanese Fantasy franchise.),

and mistook the「Long Ear Tribe」as「Elves」.

—Mn? But he lived more than a thousand years ago?

A Japanese who lived that long ago couldn't have known what an "Elf" is...

Unless time flows differently between this world and mine?

"Therefore, mistaking「Elves」for the「Long Ear Tribe」is a bit of a taboo!"

"So that's how it is. I didn't know, but it must have sounded rude. Manager, please forgive my disrespect."

I smile at Nadi-san for informing me about this, and bow to the Manager in an apology.

"Mn, forgiven."

"Sheesh, Boss. That doesn't even sound like you've forgiven him."

"Please."

As she spoke in place of the untalkative Manager, Nadi-san brushes back the Manager's hair, unveiling his ear— slightly more pointy at the tip than a regular person's— so that I can see.

The Manager pushes Nadi-san's hand away but doesn't seem to be annoyed.

From their casual interactions, these two are probably married or in love. (Or they're more like father and daughter with, what, a 260-year difference in age? (Options: No, age doesn't matter. She address him quite casually so I think they are in love) (Miaomix: Well, this is just my opinion, and as later revealed, the romantic love is quite one-sided. Reminds me of a certain 29-year-old in a teen's body...))

Alright, I shouldn't stay here too long, let's go back to everyone else.

"Then, Nadi-san, I'll come to you later about housing."

"Sure, and you were a great help today."

After saying goodbye to Nadi-and the Manager, I leave the place.

When I get out of the building, the battle at「Gateside Inn」is already over.

The monsters that invaded the city have all been exterminated and the county soldiers are starting to clean up the ant carcasses.

"Satou-san!"

Zena-san runs up when she notices me.

Perhaps unused to running in a skirt, she trips over it just as she reaches me. I put my arm out to support her before she can fall.

“Sorry.”

“You alright?”

With my arm being held onto like that, it feels somewhat pleasant right now.

Though I would like to stay like that a little longer, Zena-san’s guards are giving me looks, so I help her get back on her feet.

According to Zena, none of the county soldiers nor citizens died.

The injured ones aren’t badly hurt either, and priests who answered the alarm have already begun treatment.

Leaving Healing Magic to the professional priests, Zena-san and the others will be scouting outside the city with some light cavalry.

“Bummer, your hard-earned vacation is up in smokes!”

“It is unfortunate that I was interrupted, but my「Wind Magic」is good for reconnaissance. It’s best to go as soon as we can. Villages nearby could be under attack!”

As Zena-san explains, nearby villages all have a system that repels monsters known as「Barrier Pylons」, but they are not as powerful as the wall barrier in「Seiryuu City」.

I watch as Zena-san leaves with her team and some light cavalry. The Arcane Soldiers beside Zena-san seem to also be mobilizing, and other teams have already departed.

Hearing Liza calling for me in front of Gateside Inn, I go up to her. A man who looks like a soldier is here.

“You’re this gal’s master?”

“That’s correct. I’m Satou.”

As I answer the man, I receive a small bag from Liza.

Checking inside, I find the Cores of「Flying Ants」.

“Cores are always requisitioned by the county. I’ll take it from here.”

“No problem, but shouldn’t treatment of the casualty and clean up come first?”

The man’s unusual haste seems a little suspicious, so I check his status

under the「AR」. The county army's financial officer, huh, This man then proceeds to swipes the bag out of my hand, saying "That's the job of others," and heads toward other soldiers.

He didn't evaluate the cores, count them, or even ask for my name. Not that I'm particularly paranoid, but this is nothing less than trying to pull wool over my eyes.

"Please wait."

"What?"

When I stop him, he merely looks arrogantly over his shoulder.

Looking firmly into the side of his face, I assert my stance.

"Please write down a receipt. Here's the paper. Please note the number of cores, the equivalent value, and your name and department."

In terms of my net worth, the value of these Cores is a drop in the ocean, but it isn't right for Liza and everyone else's hard work to be taken advantage of.

"What's this? Are you saying I'll cheat you?"

"A merchant is alway cautious. Even if the client is a saint or a Hero, we will always take a written contract over any oral agreements."

Of course, I made up the second part. The skill「Deception」sure is scary.

The man scoffs then scribbles something with the ink and paper I provided. When he tries to write down a price lower than market, I merely draw out the calculations on the ground to correct his "mistake".

"Is this enough? You greedy merchant!"

His words are harsh, but I'll take the IOU note without complaint. I'll be able to exchange this for money with the County.

The man is wearing a signet ring but hasn't stamped it on the certificate. I consult my other documents, and sure enough, both my identification and the certificate of custody for Liza's spear are signed as well as stamped.

"Are you not going to stamp it?"

"I just forgot."

The man's face twists in displeasure when I remind him and grabs the certificate from my hand and stamps it forcefully.

“Are you done?!”

Not seeing any more tricks, I put the certificate away this time.

With his plan to make a killing foiled, the man leaves while cursing under his breath.

A crook like that, he’ll be fired for fraud or embezzlement before long.

>>> Skill obtained「Calculation」(Note how this subtly mirrors the way he obtains this skill in WN Volume 1.) >>> Skill obtained「Intimidation」

>>> Title obtained「New Merchant」

>>> Title obtained「Shady Merchant」

Checking the「Log」, I see additional titles and skills.

I really want to ask whoever is governing the skill system, “When did I ever intimidate someone?”

◆

As the sun sets, people on the streets have returned to their everyday life.

The「Flying Ant」that Tama defeated in the beginning seems to have been hiding inside a cargo carriage that had just arrived at「Gateside Inn」.

As for why the guards at the gate didn’t discover it during the inspection, Lilio and her team which just returned from patrol was right behind the carriage, so they probably let it go without a thorough check. Old habits die hard.

“These kids are amazing! They defended the inn against monster attacks despite being so young.”

Hearing the Madam’s praise, Pochi and Tama become bashful.

But Liza probably did the most work keeping the monsters away...

Doesn’t seem like she is going to be praised.

Let’s reward her later with some delicious chicken kebabs from that store with the red flag.

“Is this good?”

“Little more to the right. There, it’s shielded from the wind, and won’t get dust all over it when carriages pass through.”

The Husband is moving a large table to the courtyard while the Madam directs where it should be set.

The Husband goes into the kitchen from the back door, then brings out the dishes with Martha-chan.

“In front of my other patrons, I can’t let these kids stay inside, but I’ll be damned if I can’t express my gratitude! Allow my husband to show off his cooking, enjoy!”

Other than the quiche and vegetable stew I had before, there’s even a whole roasted animal. The「AR」display reveals it to be「Roasted Shortear Hare」. A mashed potato mountain sits on a large dish, and some croquette-like things are served on a long plate.

“It smells great!”

“The smell of happiness nano desu.”

“So hungry~?”

“Just wait a little more.”

I can’t help but smile at the four standing back to get out of the way, yet staring so intently at the food.

“Satou-san, I bought what you asked!”

“Thank you, Yuni-chan.”

When Yuni-chan comes back with a basket full of fruit, I give her one from the basket and some「Micro Coins」as a tip.

These fruits are for Lulu. She was already feeling unwell and only got more anemic after the scare from the「Flying Ant」attack, so now she is all pale, lying down next to me.

Arisa has been taking care of her until just a moment ago when she lost to her hunger and went to eat first.

If only there were some medicine for this. Let’s go check out the alchemy shop on the westside or an apothecary after eating.

—Oh, and all the food tasted great.

—--

(with tl notes)

Death March 2-5 w/ TLN

Volume 2 Chapter 5:【The Rat's Princess】

-Translator: MiaoMix -Editor: Options

>> Satou here. When I was a student, I read all kinds of books, but I had never once correctly guessed the perpetrator in mystery novels. I would be misled by the author every time! <<

"Young Master, come again!"

"Yes, of course."

In front of the brothel, I offhandedly answer the sexy lady's sales talk, then walk down the streets in the dark of night.

After Arisa and Lulu fell asleep, I went to look for pain-relief medicine on the west side, but some merchants I had saved in the Dungeon insisted on bringing me to drink, then all of us went to the brothel they frequent.

Thanks to all kinds of play, I got the skills「Seduction」,「Pillow Talk」,「Sex Techniques」, and「Chiropractics」. I also got various titles, but let's not mention them.

Since the merchants I came with drank a lot, they must be sound asleep next to the ladies.

Yeah, I had my fun, but Arisa and the others will smell the perfume if I just go back like this.

Going through an alley in front of the brothel that leads to Western

Boulevard, I find a sorceress girl with a wand, casting「Life Magic」on corner prostitutes, who I then ask to cast washing and drying magic on me. The price is a bit higher at night, but it's worth feeling refreshed after getting rid of my sweat.

This area is closer to the Craftsman Sector to the north, so I want to take a passenger carriage, but there are none on the street as all the stores seem to be closed other than the one doing charter carriages. ([[ED Options: So just in case you don't know, passenger carriages are like taxi, while charter carriages are like bus that go to other cities]]) Without any other options, I can only walk down the Western Boulevard at night.

Just like on Central Boulevard, evenly-spaced wooden streetlamps line the Western Boulevard. They are not lit with lightbulbs, but with the「Life Magic」spell「Lamp」, cast by sorcerers the marketplace hired.

This magical light seems to last around two hours, so nighttime is split into three this way: "Principio Noctis", "Medium Noctis", and "Finis Noctis". [^night]

During "Finis Noctis", it seems that every other streetlight will be extinguished.

It is "Medium Noctis" right now, so all the streetlights are lit, but it's still much darker than at a Japanese marketplace. About as bright as candle-lit lanterns.

Under the streetlamps, corner prostitutes in skimpy outfits are looking for customers.

Fortunately, none of them seem to be underaged girls. One「Copper」a night is quite cruel, though.

I have already done it once, so I have no intention of answering their calls. What's more, there are worrying AR labels above their heads that say『Status Affliction: Sexually Transmitted Infection (Latent)』.

Some of them even have『Status Affliction: Sexually Transmitted Infection (Active)』!

—Yeah, using protection is important!

I saw an apothecary on the way back, where I bought some pain-relief medicine for Lulu.

Their asking price was ten times that of the market price, and after haggling, they brought out useless, expired product, which I then pointed out and asked for the real thing.

As I feel nostalgic for Japan where prices are always reasonable, I check my log and see that the skill「Analysis」has been added for some reason.

The one doing the analysis wasn't me, but the Menu's AR display…

It might come in handy later, though, so I add Skill Points to it.

As I walk down the Boulevard, it had become "Finis Noctis", and now only every other streetlight is lit.

Despite in the midst of various noises, I think I hear the sound of a wingbeat, so I look up at the night sky.

I didn't see anything, but I figured out what it was after finding a feather that dropped. The result of using「Analysis」revealed that it belonged to a type of owl called「Shadow Owl」.

No wonder it was flying around at night.

I admire the beautiful feather under a streetlamp, then stow it in「Storage」under my cape to keep as a present for Pochi and Tama.

This late into the night, fewer and fewer people roam the streets.

Either due to this atmosphere or my「Enhanced Hearing」skill, I notice a faint metallic clang.

I stop to listen. Seems like there is a commotion on the other side of the street.

I'm not one to rubberneck, but I'll definitely feel bad if I ignore this, only to be told "someone was murdered" the next day.

If it's just a bar brawl, I'll leave it alone, but I'll intervene if it turns out to be a robbery or another crime in progress.

Having decided, I go into a dark alley without any streetlights. This place is near the mansion I saw during the day, I think. Since the basement had become the base of a criminal guild, could this be a conflict between members?

The moonlight casts shadows in the alley.

Focusing my eyes in the darkness, I can almost make out the figure of a hunched-over child and some guys surrounding him.

That's right, I remember having gotten the skill「Night Vision」, so let's give it Skill Points and activate it.

The pitch-black alley suddenly seems much brighter, allowing me to clearly see the shapes of people and objects.

It's like looking through a Starlight Scope. [^scope]

There's no one else here. I knock over some lumber leaning against a wall nearby, making a loud noise.

I had hoped this would scare them away, but two of the perpetrators approach me, seemingly moving by sliding.

—Those are shadows!

Things I can only describe as humanoid shadows are getting closer. The AR displays relevant information about them.

They are called「Shadow Stalkers」. Level 11 monsters. As their appearance suggests, physical attacks don't seem to affect them.

I don't know whether they got past the city's Anti-Monster Barrier or escaped from the dungeon, but I'm glad I don't have to hold back against some monsters.

Taking out the「Magic Gun」from「Storage」, I aim at one shadow and pull the trigger.

I keep shooting in case the shadow would dodge, but due to it being

either slower than I expected or too confident in its abilities, it faces the bullet head-on without dodging at all. The shadow evaporates, and its reddish Core drops to the ground.

As I dealt with the first, the second one has gotten close.

This shadow swings a blackish blade at me. Whether this blade also consists of shadow, I have no way of knowing from the front.

I shift to one side, dodging the blade with the reflexes granted by the skill "「Evasion」.

I hear the sound of scrap lumber being cut up behind me.

Due to this maneuver that shifted my position, the freshly-cut surface of the scrap lumber that was hit in my stead comes into view.

I have no intention to be cut by *that*! Although I do have the skill「Self Healing」that can more or less heal my wounds, I don't want to imagine trying to re-attach a severed arm.

I raise my gun to defeat it before it can move again.

—WHAT?!

With a humanly impossible movement, the shadow's arm bends against its joint and swings at me.

I dodge it by a hair's breadth.

Dropping down to the floor this way, I fire three consecutive shots and finish off the shadow.

Whew, I completely forgot they were not human...

I clap my cheeks to focus myself.

I have to get a move on, or that kid will be killed by the shadows.

The kid, wielding some hatchet-like weapon that would occasionally glow red, is keeping three of those shadows at bay.

He is quite skilled but seems to be protecting something behind him,

which restricts his movements.

Occasionally, the shadows' whip-like swords would leave gashes on the kid's body.

I try to snipe the two shadows that are not aligned with the kid with the「Magic Gun」. With the setting at maximum this time, one shadow is destroyed with a single shot.

Sadly, the price of increased power is a longer cooldown time.

As a result, my plan to solve the problem by sniping everything from afar has failed.

Having noticed me, one of the shadows approach. As I try to shoot it down, it splits into several shadowy arrows that fly toward me.

There's no room to dodge in this narrow alley.

—To my side!

I jump off the wall into the air.

The shadowy arrows change their course to stay on my trail, but I keep dodging them by jumping from each side of the wall.

It's not an easy manoeuvre, but thanks to the support of the skill「Vertical Maneuvering」, I evaded them successfully without messing up my inner ear.

When the arrows combine once more into a single humanoid figure, I shoot it down with the「Magic Gun」.

A bang echoes through the alley.

—Shit.

The kid, burdened by blood loss, was unable to dodge the shadow's attack and was slammed into the stone wall.

I quickly check his health—safe. He's still alive.

The shadow seems to have transformed into a black sphere and

tackled the kid. It knew a linear whip-like attack would be dodged, so it tried a planar one, huh.

A crack has appeared at the center of the sphere. The handle of the kid's hatchet is sticking out of it. Physical attacks shouldn't have worked— I see, a magical weapon, huh.

Digging into the dirt, I close in on the sphere hugging the ground like a Fighting Game character. [^fighting]

Within three steps, I stand in front of the shadow and drive the hatched into the sphere by stomping on the handle.

Along with the sound of something shattering, the shadow disperses into smoke, as the shards of its cracked Core splatters across the ground. I ignore the scattered shards and recover only the Magical Hatchet.

Anyway, I really should check on the kid.

Like a marionette cut from its strings, the kid lies against the wall.

No, calling him a kid was my mistake, as the AR display reveals.

Running to his side, I remove his helm to look at his face— if I didn't already know what to expect, I would probably scream.

Under that red helmet, his face is that of a rat's, covered in gray fur. His rat face looks surprisingly rugged and manly. [^ratface]

He is a Ratman cavalry. Likely due to organ damage, he is coughing up a crimson fluid. His status says『Heavily Injured (Organ Damage)』, and his health is slowly dropping.

"...Who're jou?"

With his eyes open slightly, the ratman questions with a weak voice.

"Grr, jou dat bastard's underling?" [^speech]

"I'm not."

I don't know who the ratman means by "that bastard", but I quickly deny it. Probably, the guy who sent out those shadows.

There's someone wrapped in the blanket he was protecting, or so the speck of light on the「Radar」tells me. That person has not stirred at all, so they're likely unconscious.

While I talk to the ratman, I read the AR display above the blanket. Its unexpected content is quite surprising.

"I can't, hold out, anymore. Help the bri-, *brincess*."

"Got it, leave it to me."

Finally relaxing after hearing my immediate promise, the ratman passes out.

Of course, there's a reason I answered so quickly. I know how to find someone who knows his princess— or "brincess", as he pronounced it.

Right, let's move. His health is still dropping as we speak.

I try to stop the bleeding on his visible wounds with cloth taken from Storage.

>>> Skill obtained「First Aid」

>>> Title obtained「Lifesaver」

Like always, I obtained the skill quite easily, so I quickly add Skill Points to and activate it, before resuming first aid.

Though the smell of blood and the beast-like odor makes me grimace, I continue treatment.

Good, at least his health isn't dropping anymore.

I take out a hooded cloak that's as dark as the night and put it on.

I pull the hood over my eyes, then wrap a long towel around my face like a muffler. Just to be safe, I also blank out my name in the「Social」tab.

Now my identity is fully hidden.

The silver mask will be quite conspicuous under the moonlight, so I'll go

without it this time.

I lift up the princess and the ratman and jump onto the roof by kicking off the wall. Then after leaping from house to house on the rooftop like some phantom thief, I arrive at the All-Round Agency's back door.

I firmly knock on the door.

Unfortunately, I already checked the「Map」, and the statuses of both the Manager and Nadi-san indicate「Asleep」.

Looks like both of them live on the second floor of the Anything Agency but in different rooms. Not married or in a relationship then.

It would be problematic if I make too much noise and alert the guards, so I take out wires from「Storage」and pick the locks. The「Treasure Chest Picking」skill seems to also be applicable here.

>>> Skill obtained「Lock Picking」

>>> Title obtained「Lockpicker」

Entering inside, I let the two of them lie on the somewhat stiff reception sofa.

The ratman's helmet makes a crisp chime after hitting the sofa's frame.

—Oh, the Manager woke up.

His status changed from「Asleep」to「None」. Seems like he's quietly going to wake up Nadi-san.

"B-, boss? I-, is this *yobai*?" [^yobai]

"Wrong."

My「Enhanced Hearing」skill tells me what's going on upstairs. For some reason, Nadi-san sounded quite delighted.

With Nadi-san hidden behind his back, the Manager comes down the stairs.

It would be a problem if I am mistaken as an intruder and attacked, so I decide to talk first.

“Good evening, sorry to disturb you. Nadi-san, it’s Satou.”

“Huh, Satou-san? What business do you have at this time of night?”

Nadi-san’s voice sounds incredulous. Yeah, can’t be helped.

“I’ve brought the Manager’s acquaintances. They’re gravely injured, so I hope you can treat them quickly...”

“Acquaintances?”

Hearing his acquaintances are injured, the Manager and Nadi-san leave the cover of the stairs.

“■ ■ ■ ■ Mana Light.”

The Manager waves his staff to cast magic. It shines like LED lighting.

“This is a ratman? This red helmet, he’s the infamous ratman cavalry ‘Red Helm’ on the Wanted list!”

“Never met.”

Having seen Red Helm, the Manager denies. I correct his misunderstanding.

“The Manager’s acquaintance is inside this blanket. Red Helm called her ‘princess’.”

“A Princess of Ratmen? Within the Ratmen’s ranks, no one should have titles other than the tribe chief and the warriors...”

The Ratmen are a militant race? Nadi-san is unexpectedly knowledgeable.

While pondering such things, I open up the blanket to let them see.

“—Mia.”

As I thought, the “princess” Red Helm was protecting is the Manager’s acquaintance.

Watching from the back, Nadi-san squeaks, “Eh?!” and freezes in

place. I can empathize with that.

Reason being, the person in the blanket is a girl with white skin, light green hair, and *pointy ears*.

“Why, she’s an Elf!”

Nadi-san exclaims, shocked.

That’s right— precisely because this girl is an Elf, I have brought her to the Manager, the only Elf there is in this city.

They’re also both Boruënans.

Likely woken up by Nadi-san’s exclamation, Princess Mia opens her eyes a bit. She slowly looks at her surroundings.

When her out-of-focus silver eyes shifts to my direction, Princess Mia whispers “Beautiful”, then passes out.

What did she see that made her say “beautiful”? I’m quite curious, but let’s focus on the half-dead Red Helm.

“Also, what do we do with this ‘Red Helm’ person? Take him to the guards?”

“Savior.”

“Hmm, let’s see. Since he’s Princess Mia’s savior, we shouldn’t take him to the guards or something.”

“Not princess.”

“Apparently, Mia-san is not a princess.”

Nadi-san helps translate the Manager’s overly short sentences.

“Ack!” We hear a pained cough behind us.

“Ah, won’t he die if we don’t treat him soon?”

“Mn?”

“This is bad. I’ll go get ex-priest Horn living in the back alley. He should be willing to treat someone with some circumstances. Looks like the bleeding has been stopped, Boss, so just use magic to ensure his

breathing is unobstructed. Also, please take off that red helmet and hide it somewhere.”

With my reminder, Nadi-san hurriedly jumps into action. She grabs her jacket hanging on the wall of the first floor and walk out the store while still in her pajamas.

“It’s too dangerous to go out alone at night! I’ll go with you.”

Having seen the Manager begin chanting a spell, I catch up with Nadi-san.

◆

The next morning, Arisa starts interrogating me for some reason.

“Man! You already have me, yet you went to the brothel! What complaints do you have about a beautiful girl like me who’s always ready to go!”

“Pipe down.”

Why would I even lust after a grade school-aged little girl.

As the heavily-breathing Arisa, who has taken off her pajamas, approaches half-nakedly, I throw the jacket I had hanging above the bed on top of her.

“Ooh, the *essence* of a shota...”

This damn pervert— Having just started to huff the smell of the jacket, Arisa suddenly exclaims “A beastly stink!” and throws the jacket away.

“Wait, you mean you’re into the hairy ones?”

Arisa, as if distancing herself from me, says something out of the left field.

I can imagine what she’s thinking, but enough with the rude assumptions.

“When I went to buy ‘Lulu’s medicine’ last night, I rescued a half-dead beastman on the way back.”

To avoid drawing attention to other things, I specifically emphasize ’Lulu’s medicine’.

“Hm~? A woman?”

“Wrong. It was a man with a rugged face.”

“Is this BL? It’s BL! Like a Dragon × Snake situation, where the macho Tiger Ear guy forces himself on the Rabbit Ear boy! Ooh, so exciting!” [^bl]

“Stop yelling about stupid things, and put your clothes on. That’s an ‘Order’.”

Sheesh, I’ve no interest in that Boy’s Love bullshit.

Probably due to the ruckus, Lulu has risen from sleep. Her face still looks a bit pale.

“How do you feel?”

“Yes, much better than yesterday.”

“I’ve bought medicine for you. Take one when the pain gets bad.”

I give her the packets of pain-relief medicine while telling her the instructions given by the apothecary. This medicine is a little different, as it should be taken before or during meals.

“Right, Arisa.”

“What?”

As I open up one packet and hand it to Lulu along with a cup of water, I tell Arisa what I forgot to say yesterday about the dungeon.

“Huh, so civilians can’t enter the「Seiryuu City」dungeon?”

“Uh-huh, it’s impossible for now.”

Seeing Arisa sitting depressed on the bed, I comfort her a bit.

“Goshujin-sama, are you going to settle in this city?”

“No, after I finish touring this city, I thinking about going south to the

Duchy.”

“Touring?!”

I’ve gone almost everywhere in「Seiryuu City」. All that’s left is my promise to eat with Zena-san at the restaurant inside the citadel.

After that’s done, I want to head to the Duchy and then「Dungeon City Seriveera」, where the beastgirls can live comfortably.

The reason I’ve made the Duchy my next destination is mostly that I want to see the oft-praised night view along the river.

“So then, so then...”

Arisa perks up and comes closer.

“After the Duchy, I want to go to Dungeon City!”

“Mm, that’s fine with me.”

“Really?! Promise!”

Arisa sticks out her little finger, and we make a pinkie promise.

Looking at Arisa staring at her pinkie-promised little finger and giggling, I urge her to go to the stable to eat breakfast with the beastgirls.

I should tell the beastgirls about going to the Duchy and Dungeon City!

After everyone ate breakfast, I go to the All-Round Agency alone.

“Good morning, how is the situation?”

“Fine, both of them are still asleep.”

Red Helm has already been treated by ex-priest Horn, but since he can only cast low-level Holy Magic, the wounds have not been fully healed.

The bleeding has already been stopped, but the organ damage can only be repaired a little without mid-level「Holy Magic」or higher.

Wha? I thought the Manager can use「Elementary Magic」and「Sylvan Magic」. Can’t he help with healing?

I voice my doubt to Nadi-san.

“Boss’s magic isn’t suited for healing! He says he can only stop bleeding and disinfect wounds.”

Right, if the Manager could use Healing, we wouldn’t have to find ex-priest Horn in the middle of the night…

“Can’t we treat him with potions?”

“Mid-level potions could treat him, but they’re way too expensive!”

All the potions I found in the dungeon were given away, so I don’t have any right now.

I’ve already saved him so lending him some money for medicine is no big deal, but it feels like I’m being a little too nosy.

Seeing my silence, Nadi-san seems to have misunderstood— “Don’t worry about the medicine. Boss has already made a deal with an acquaintance, who will help mix the medicine for cheap if we prepare the ingredients.”

—And adds on.

In order to gather ingredients, the Manager got up early to go to a forest some distance from here.

Since the Manager is taking care of Red Helm’s injury, I’ll ask about Mia’s situation next.

“The princess doesn’t seem to have been hurt. Has she still not woken up?”

“Mia-chan wasn’t hurt, but her body is weak from extreme fatigue. According to Boss, it seems like the result of sustained mana exhaustion.”

An exhaustion of mana, huh… If only I could give her some of my meaninglessly ample mana.

With that said, what did she do to become this weak?

“Symptoms like this should be able to be treated with Boss’s Elementary Magic ‘Mana Transfer’ and Sylvan Magic ‘Stamina Charge’...”

But for some reason, whenever mana or stamina is transferred with magic, it would vanish like pouring water into a leaky caldron.

Neither the long-lived Manager nor the knowledgeable Nadi-san knows the cause.

I check Mia's status through the Map.

Age 130. Female. Level 7. Skills are「Water Magic」and「Archery」, and the Gift「Spirit Vision」. Titles are「Cradle Master」and「Young Child of Boruënan Forest」.

Judging from the terms「Cradle」and「Young Child」in her titles, 130 years old for Elves probably count as children. It's hard to imagine her real age from her grade school or middle school-aged appearance.

Mia seems to be a nickname, as her full name is "Misanariä Boruënan".

I thought Misanariä would be shortened to "Misa" or "Ria", but I guess "Mia" is the result of Elven conventions?

There aren't any status afflictions like a curse or a disease, nor anything unusual about her titles. I don't think she's staying in bed because of the「Cradle Master」title either.

From what I can see, she hasn't recovered even 10% of her stamina, but her mana is slowly recovering, as the gauge is visibly filling up.

The Manager's treatment is starting to show its effect, isn't it?

I want to tell Nadi-san about this, but I wouldn't be able to explain how I know it. So, I talk about something else and see if I can lead the topic in that direction.

"Other than「Healing Magic」, isn't there any other way?"

"Mia-chan can also be treated with potions that recover mana, but that's quite expensive as well."

Naid-san smiles weakly while adding "Can't help it, everyone's poor".

"I think she can also recover if we bring her to some place that's full of mana like a Leyline or a Source, which won't cost any money, but the only

ones around here are either deep within the Count's castle or the 'Dragon's Canyon'."

I see— "Source"?

I was going to ask Nadi-san more about a "Source", but a sound can be heard from the second floor, so let's put it off for now.

Since the sound seems to be coming from where Mia is sleeping, I check the Map—Mia's status has changed from「Fainted」to「None」.

Nadi-san doesn't seem to have heard, so I give her a hint.

"There seems to be some movement on the second floor. Could she have woken up?"

"Satou-san's ears are as sensitive as those of Elves or Rabbitmen!"

Rabbitmen, huh. Are they real life bunny girls?

There doesn't seem to be any in「Seiryuu City」, but I want to see one for myself!

Nadi-san and I go up to the second floor where Mia is sleeping.

Before Nadi-san can allow it, I'll wait outside the room.

"Mia-chan, are you awake?"

"Who?"

"I'm Nadi, an employee of this store. This is Boss— Yusalatoya's store."

"Yuya's..."

Mia's voice is as youthful as her appearance. Perhaps because she just woke up, she sounds a bit coarse.

"Outside, who?"

Mia seems to have noticed me standing outside the room.

Are her senses this sharp? —No, probably because she heard two people walk upstairs.

“It’s the person who saved you and Mr. Red Helm—”

“Mizé?”

Mia whispers, her voice overlapping with Nadi-san’s.

The Manager, and now Mia too. Is being especially untalkative a characteristic of their race?

“Is the ratman with the red helmet named Mizé-san? His has been treated, and is resting.”

“Mn.”

More correctly, “has gone through intensive care”, but telling the truth might only make Mia more worried, so that’s all she said.

Nadi-san continues her interrupted introduction of me.

“So, the person outside is Satou-san.”

“...Satou.”

“Can he come in?”

“Mn.”

I enter the room when Nadi-san calls.

This room might be Nadi-san’s bedroom as there is a soothing atmosphere filled with a feminine style.

Well, there’s more than a few decorative plants, though.

“Satou?”

“Nice meeting you. I’m Satou, a traveling merchant.”

I answer Mia’s question with a self-introduction.

Perhaps due to her neat, youthful features and silver eyes, she has the air of a doll.

“Spirit user?”

Mia’s sudden question has me stumped.

I have used「Fire Magic」, but according to the beginner’s spellbook, it

shouldn't have anything to do with spirits.

Of course, if there are such things as Sexy Water Spirit Undine or Voluptuous Sylvan Spirit Dryad, I would like to meet them!

"No, I've never met any spirits, you know?"

"Can't see?"

Mia makes a very incredulous expression.

I thought it was something very common, but when I ask Nadi-san, she asserts, "Only those with the Gift「Spirit Vision」can see spirits."

Indeed, Mia has the Gift「Spirit Vision」. Since the Manager doesn't have that gift, I suppose not all Elves can see them.

I help Nadi-san give Mia a drink.

"Do you feel like you can eat?"

"Mn."

"I'll go make some soup or oatmeal, so could you stay with Mia for a bit?"

As Nadi-san apologetically requests me, I agree without a question.

Until the warm smell of oatmeal is carried up by the wind from downstairs, I chatted with Mia about spirits to spend the time.

Of course, without Nadi-san's excellent interpretation, I couldn't figure out what spirits exactly are from Mia's short answers.

There were a lot of vague descriptors like "fluffy" and "shiny", but I deduced from her few words that spirits are something that "runs through Leylines, conducts via mana, and possess attributes".

As for other results, I obtained the skills「Elvish」and「Decryption」, while Mia became attached to me.

I got Elvish after asking, "How do I say 'Good Morning' in Elvish?" You can guess how I got「Decryption」.

After having oatmeal, Mia starts to look sleepy.

“Sorry to intrude on you for this long. I should get going.”

“Mmph.”

Having said that, I was getting up from the chair next to Mia’s bed, but she stops me by grabbing the sleeve on my robe.

“Stay.”

Mia begs, looking uneasy.

Well, let’s stay by her side until she falls asleep.

◆

“This word is ‘chair’— Alright, the tenth card, GET!”

“Nuu~”

“Arisa, too strong no desu!”

“Pochi, Tama, if you have time to lament, you should try harder!”

“Arisa is quite good!”

In one corner of the Gateside Inn’s courtyard, I can hear everyone’s merry voices.

Besides my kids, Yuni-chan seems to have joined them.

Not seeing anyone when I arrive at the courtyard, I follow the「Radar」and find them gathered inside a small space between the hedges, playing some sort of game.

They’re sitting around the pile of cards laid out on the ground like in Concentration. [^cards]

Are those the learning cards we bought yesterday?

From everyone’s reactions, the game seems to involve placing the cards word-side up, and if anyone correctly guesses what a word says, they would get that card.

The best part about it, since the correct answer is drawn on the back, they can play even when they haven’t learned how to read.

“Looks like you’re enjoying yourselves.”

“Goshujin-sama nano desu!”

“We’re learning~ the words~?”

Seeing me peek inside the hedge, Pochi and Tama run up to me.

“Look nano desu!”

“Three~?”

The two of them show me the cards they got, looking up and expecting to be praised, so I answer their wishes by patting their heads and telling them, “That’s great!”

I ask them about their cards as well.

“What card is this?”

“This is ‘meat’ nano desu!”

Sorry, this says ‘goat’.

“And what about this card?”

“That’s also ‘meat’~?”

No, it’s ‘rabbit’.

I look over to Arisa, who probably already knows they are wrong.

“Well~ They’re so confidently claiming those say ‘meat’, I don’t have the heart to tell them otherwise.”

Arisa confesses with a wry smile.

I try to teach these two the correct words.

“Wrong no desu? It’s goat, but it’s meat no desu.”

“Nuu~? It’s rabbit, but meat~?”

The two look confused after hearing my explanation.

“Then, is this card, too, not ‘poultry’, but actually ‘chicken’?”

Liza shows one of her cards, completely shocked. “If you know it’s the ‘meat’ of a ‘chicken’, then why not just stop calling it ‘meat’?” I really don’t have the heart to tell her that.

I think I understand how Arisa feels.

I gather my spirits and teach them the correct reading for every single card.

“What’s the word for meat *nano desu*?”

“This is how you write it.”

Since there is no card for the word “meat”, I draw one myself.

>>> Skill obtained「Drawing」

>>> Skill obtained「Writing」

>>> Skill obtained「Playing」

That was quite the result for just drawing on a card.

Also, I got the skill「Teaching」when telling Pochi and Tama words. [^teaching] It looks very useful, so let's maximize its level.

Oh, I'll jot down whatever actions I can think of that might grant skills, and find some time later to do a Skill Acquisition Olympia.

During the small talk while I made the new card, I unexpectedly find out that Arisa doesn't actually know how to read or write Shiga Language.

"In my country, male chauvinism was strong. Even as royalty, I was told that there was no need for me to learn to read, and couldn't find someone to teach me. In order to be able to read literature like the spellbooks, I had to sneak into my brothers' classes to learn the lingua franca."

Arisa has had quite the tough life though her normal behavior completely destroys that impression.

"Therefore, I'll only need three days to learn every one of these cards!"

It seems like quite the bluff, but she seems to have already memorized thirty out of these hundred cards.

"Amazing, do you have a trick?"

"Just pretend the words are pictures. How about starting with words you're interested in?"

Yuni-chan, who hasn't even memorized one, asks Arisa for tips.

"Ah, there you are, Yuni!"

Brushing aside the branches of the hedge, Martha-chan comes in. Seeing her hair stuck on the branches, I help her out of it.

Arisa excitedly expands her nostrils, murmuring "It's not daphne, but this will do!" or something incomprehensible. Probably a reference to some manga Arisa read in her previous life? [^scooby]

With Martha-chan's appearance, Yuni-chan looks a bit distressed.

Oh, that's right, Yuni-chan should be working right now.

"Sorry, Martha-san."

"Sheesh, always acting like a kid. Alright, I'll help you get it done, so let's go clean the stable and change the hay before lunch prep!"

Martha-chan chides Yuni-chan, then energetically rolls up her sleeves, ready to help cover for the girl's mistake.

"Uh, um, those are already done."

"Huh?"

Yuni-chan apologetically informs her, looking up to check Martha-chan's reaction.

"Truth is, Pochi and Tama helped me."

Seems like the two of them helped her finish the job early, so she could play together with them.

"I pulled up water like 'Heya!' no desu!"

"And took care of horses~?"

Those two describe what they did with the help of body language.

I pet the heads of Pochi and Tama who did their best to help while praising them "You did well!" Tama eagerly rubs her head against my hand. Meanwhile, Pochi obediently lets me pet her, but her tail is wagging like it might fly off.

In the end, after reminding Yuni-chan that she should report back as soon as she finishes the task, Martha-chan also stays here to watch the card game.

◆

"Hello! My name is Arisa."

"Pochi nano desu!"

“Tama~”

The three young girls open the door to Mia's room and start introducing themselves.

Perhaps startled by the sound of Arisa and others running up the stairs, Mia has hidden under the covers, peeking out between the gaps.

During lunch today, when I mentioned that we were looking after but only the ratman, but also “the princess the ratman knight protected”, they all wanted to see, so I brought them here.

This way, Mia would not be bored, and Nadi-san could be relieved of babysitting and nursing.

Of course, besides the children, Lulu and Liza have also come. Those two are helping Nadi-san on the first floor. The medicine I gave Lulu was probably quite effective, as she looks better now and could eat lunch normally.

“Mn, Mia.”

Mia sheepishly pokes out her face, revealing her eyes, and replies to Arisa and others with a super short self-introduction.

Seeing Mia’s shy, bashful expression, I can’t hide my surprise.

Mia’s originally silver eyes have become a brilliant emerald green.

She definitely isn't someone else, so was it probably her「Spirit Vision」skill that caused her eye color to change?

“Wha!”

“A princess nano desu!”

“Beautiful hair ~?”

For a reason different from mine, Arisa is also quite shocked from seeing Mia’s appearance.

She probably made the same assumption Nadi-san did. Unexpectedly, Pochi and Tama are not at all surprised.

“Wait, I thought she was a rat princess?” [^cheese]

“Nope! ‘The princess the ratman knight protected’, didn’t I say?”

I correct Arisa’s misunderstanding. Actually, I wanted to play a little prank, so I intentionally said it in an ambiguous manner.

Well, her「Skill Check」couldn’t seem to figure out she was an Elf through the blanket. Unlike my Menu’s AR display, she needs a line of sight to

actually identify.

Probably owing to the friendly Arisa, Pochi and Tama soon warm up to Mia.

“I'm heading downstairs for a bit. I'll leave Mia to you! ”

“Okay~”

“Yes, nano desu!”

“Got it~?”

“Mmph.”

My kids quickly agree, but Mia makes a dissatisfied grump. She reaches out from under her blanket, pulling on my robe, and would only let go only after I promise to come back soon.

How come she is so attached to me?

Downstairs, Nadi-san is wolfing down her meal.

“I'm saved! I've only had some oatmeal in the morning. ”

Having finished her simple meal of rye bread and soup, she is now contently enjoying the herbal tea Lulu made.

I call it herbal tea, but it's actually just some fragrant leaves in water. It's not as strong as mint, but the aftertaste is refreshing. Pretty cheap too, at only one Micro for an entire bag.

“You are a traveling merchant, right, Satou-san?”

With one sip of the herbal tea, Nadi-san asks.

That's right, that was the setting I made. As I haven't done anything merchant-like, I confirm with a twinge of guilt.

“Do you have a carriage?”

“No, I did have a horse, but it ran away during the ‘Starfall’ that time.”

I think that was the excuse I told Miss Iona at first.

“What a disaster! If you can afford it, would you like to buy a carriage?”

With an apprehensive expression, she suddenly suggests.

Apparently, a merchant the Manager knows is planning to retire, and would like to sell his carriage, along with the two horses used to pull it.

After touring this place, I plan on bringing the beastgirls somewhere they can live peacefully, so the timing for the carriage pitch is just perfect, but there is an issue.

“That's quite the opportunity, but I don't have experience driving a carriage —”

I do have an automobile license, but not one for horse-drawn carriages.

Not knowing whether to reject, or ask her to find someone who can teach me to drive, I fall silent.

Oh, Lulu seems to want to talk, so I prompt her.

“Lulu, if you want to say something, don't worry and go ahead. ”

“Uh, um, I have driven a one-horse carriage before.”

Despite some stuttering, she tries her best to tell me what she is capable of.

“Then, I'll let you teach me how to drive Lulu. Nadi-san, as you can see, I'll take the deal. ”

“What a quick decision! But Satou-san, aren't you going to check the price?”

Oops, with so much gold in「Storage」, I've become a little too careless.

I glance at the carriages passing「Gateside Plaza」, checking their market prices. I sure love cheating.

“I'll trust your judgment on this, Nadi-san. There's no problem as long as it's within budget. The rest can be Nadi-san's commission! ”

Imitating the expression of a calculating merchant from old movies, I hand Nadi-san a bag of gold.

The amount is two「Gold」above market price, which should be enough if the margin isn't unreasonable.

If a deal still can’t be reached this way, I’ll put my「Negotiation」and「Haggling」skills to work.

“When did you...”

Though Nadi-san is puzzled, she still takes the money, counts it, and writes a receipt.

I was so on point that it felt unnatural, huh. I shouldn’t have put the money in bags inside「Storage」ahead of time, but agree on an amount first and pay her later.

Yeah, duly noted. I’ll take more care next time.

◆

“Let’s practice camping before going on the journey!”

As a result of Arisa’s declaration, we decided to practice camping on an empty lot in the westside.

We went to this westside lot because Nadi-san had gotten permission from the owner for us. Though it is normally free to use, since we are going to start a flame, we asked just to be safe.

The lot is full of weeds, so we bought some grass-cutting scythes from a nearby hardware store, and start by learning how to clear the campground.

Arisa, Lulu, and Liza, the three of them went to buy whatever equipment we were missing and foodstuff to practice cooking.

“Grass-cutting~?”

“Let us! Nano desu!”

Pochi and Tama start excitedly cutting the weed.

I, too, start cutting weed alongside the two, then gather all the cut grass in one pile. The weed growing where the fire pit will be set up shouldn’t be cut, but rather yanked from the roots to expose the soil underneath.

I then make the fire pit with rocks that Pochi and Tama collected. I based it on what I could remember from school camping trips but looks like it should work.

We have nothing to do before the shopping group comes back, so I lie down on the pile of grass next to Pochi and Tama to watch the clouds.

During the preparation, the「Log」told me that I was obtaining skills, so I take this chance to check. I got more skills than I expected. Six in total, including「Grass Cutting」,「Cultivation」,「Pioneering」,「Collecting」,

「Stonework」, and 「Camping」. [^skills]

「Camping」 is a skill I thought I've already obtained. Seem like sleeping on the dungeon floor or setting up a tent on a large boulder don't count. The condition is quite a mystery.

"Thanks for waiting, we're done shopping!"

With Arisa leading them, Liza and Lulu have come back.

Liza makes some adjustments on the fire pit and starts a fire under a pot. She seems to have already gotten water on the way here.

"Heheh, look, look!"

Arisa shows me a whistling kettle with pride.

In this world without any gas stoves, this is probably their "watercan", but it seems to be an outdoor model, to be hung from a rod and heated on the fire like the pot. [^watercan]

Lulu puts tea leaves into the kettle and hangs it next to the pot to brew.

Today's menu: soup made from three types of diced roots and preserved meat, served with rye bread.

Wheat bread seems to be found only within the inner walls. I don't mind rye bread for now, so it's not necessary to take the effort to buy that before I tire of this.

Today, Liza swaps her spear with a kitchen knife to serve as the chef. Lulu helps with things like peeling while Arisa offers support from the side. Pochi and Tama have been entrusted with watching the kettle boil.

I go to collect the tree stump in one corner of the lot. It'll serve as our table.

Since no one is watching, I pull up the stump with brute force. I was able to replicate an action only possible with construction machinery thanks to my extraordinary Strength.

As for the roots sticking out of the ground, I trim them off with the 「Magical Hatchet」 I borrowed from Red Helm.

The whistling kettle begins to beep.

For some reason, Pochi and Tama don't move the kettle away from the fire but run toward me.

"Kettle is angry~?"

"Help nano desu! The kettle person is angry nano desu!"

The kettle "person"...

It seems to be the first time Pochi and Tama have ever seen a whistling kettle, so they were startled by the steam-driven whistle.

"It's just telling us that the water is boiling by whistling!"

"Not angry~?"

"Why does it go beep when boiling no desu?"

I try to teach them about steam, but they don't seem to get it.

"Well, duh. You're not teaching STEM students. You're trying to tell them that water becomes a thousand times the volume after evaporating. There's no way they will understand!"

Wrong, Arisa. One thousand six hundred and ninety-nine times the volume.

Obviously, Arisa doesn't hear the retort inside my head and proceeds to open the kettle and place the lid lightly on top.

"Look."

The kettle lid is shaking with a clank due to the steam.

"When water gets hot, it will give out a white smoke. This white smoke is very powerful, and it can push on the lightweight lid."

Arisa takes some grass nearby to make a waterwheel. Well, a windmill actually.

She puts the windmill on top of the steam to make it turn, then blow on it herself to turn it.

"Like people blowing out air, the steam is blowing out air, so that's why it

can whistle!”

“Arisa is amazing~”

“I understand no desu!”

It makes a bit sore, but the two of them did understand Arisa's explanation.

If I could use「Water Magic」, I would like to invent a spell that can evaporate water to blow away my opponent or create a wall. Well, maybe something similar already exists.

While we were resting after the meal, I notice some dots on the Radar and look over.

Stopped in their tracks as we meet our eyes were three Dogman and Catman children. Their stuffed animal-like appearance looks quite familiar.

"We're gwateful, fo' chiken kebobs."

"Sanks fo' chiken kebobs."

"Id was, dewicious."

The beastman children all thank me profusely, before putting down a leaf that served as a plate, filled with some nuts and berries, on the stump in front of where I'm sitting.

"These are?"

"Dis is, wepayment." [^sweets]

A repayment, is it?

Pochi and Tama come running over.

Arisa and Lulu went to buy fruit for dessert, taking Liza as their guard, so they're not here.

"No violence~?"

"Bullying goshujin-sama is a no-no nano desu!"

Seems like they thought I was being attacked by these kids and mobilized.

"That's not it. These kids are just giving me nuts and berries as thanks for the chicken kebabs."

Hearing my explanation, Pochi and Tama finally relax.

“This is an acorn nano desu! It’s very delicious nano desu!”

“This one is goji~? It’s also delicious~” [^acorn]

The two pick up things from the plate, telling me what they are.

“Dose are, dis person’s!”

Perhaps nervous that Pochi and Tama are taking from the plate without asking, the children protest.

I really want to accept their token of gratitude, but according to what Pochi and Tama had told me, isn’t these the children’s hard-earned food?

—Right, let’s just repay them for their repayment.

If they came a little earlier, there would have been soup and bread.

There is still two kilos worth of jerky. I’ll give it all to them.

“Thank you for this.”

I use a handkerchief to wrap the nuts and berries, then put them inside the「Garage Bag」.

Having seen that, those children are about to leave with satisfied smiles when I stop them.

“I would like you to do me a favor.”

“Hwat, is id?”

“We can’t finish this much meat, could you take it with you?”

Realizing Pochi and Tama are about to say something, I quickly cover their mouths.

Probably, something about being able to eat any amount of meat.

“Is dis, hine?”

“Yes, it would be a huge help.”

I pretend not to see Pochi and Tama’s looks of protest.

The children leave while carefully holding the wax-paper-wrapped jerky, as I wave them goodbye.

Meanwhile, Pochi and Tama somehow discovered that it was fun to nuzzle my stomach, and joyfully rubbed against my stomach until Arisa and the others came back.

◆

After the picnic in the name of camping practice, I visit the All-Round Agency on the way back, to sign the necessary documents to purchase the carriage.

With Nadi-san as the go-between, the purchase is effective immediately, and it will be signed over by the day after tomorrow.

What efficiency!

When I went through the paperwork for the carriage, Arisa proposes that we escort Mia back to the Elf village.

According to Nadi-san, the Elf village is south-east of the Duchy, so we can take her home after we visit there.

Since Mia herself agreed to our proposal and I also want to see the Elf village with my own eyes, we decide to consult with the Manager when he gets back. After all, such a thing should be decided by the guardian.

Despite having reached an agreement, the Manager still hasn't returned to「Seiryuu City」.

He was supposed to come back either last night or this morning...

But Nadi-san, who cares the most for the Manager, doesn't seem to be worried, so it's probably alright.

Then, regarding the carriage, after the show-and-tell in front of the All-Round Agency, Lulu and I went outside Seiryuu city to practice driving.

"The weather is nice today too."

"...Yes, that's right."

I try to make small talk with her, but Lulu is still stiff.

Probably because it's just the two of us, Lulu is so nervous that her shoulders are locked. The horses, seemingly affected by this tension, have been breathing shallow and unable to stay calm.

"You don't have to be so nervous. Behaving like Arisa— might be a little too much, but acting more relaxed and casual like Pochi and Tama is fine."

"That...I'm just a slave, this is unthinkable."

Lulu weakly murmurs. Looks like changing her mind will take a while.

First, how about relaxing with a deep breath?

"Lulu, inhale deeply—"

Taking the reins from Lulu, I direct her. Easing tension is best done by relaxing the body as well, so I teach her the seated stretching routine I used to do at work sometimes.

Perhaps due to having become younger when I came here, I haven't had to do that once yet.

"Have you relaxed a bit? Since we have the time, let's chat."

I look away from Lulu and toward the drifting clouds while making small talk with a casual tone.

Despite having relaxed somewhat, Lulu would still only give curt replies like "Yes" or "That's right".

Anyway, Lulu really isn't good at interacting with men.

From what Arisa told me, she was bullied for a long time by her male cousins and neighborhood boys, so it's understandable.

If she's so hesitant to talk, the best course is to have her speak freely from the mind.

When talking about something she's proud of or admires, words should flow right from her mouth.

I and my otaku friends are all like that, after all.

So, what should the topic be?

After some consideration, I decide to talk about Arisa.

“—Exactly! Arisa really is amazing!”

My plan worked, it seems.

At the mention of Arisa, Lulu clearly lit up.

Her eyes shone and her cheeks flushed. When she does this with her already gorgeous appearance, she looks more gorgeous than ever.

I may fall into the Lolicon Abyss if I’m not careful, frighteningly.

“You sure admire your little sister Arisa!”

“Yes! Sometimes, I even forget that I’m the older sister!”

“Indeed, she doesn’t act like an eleven-year-old at all!”

“Arisa has been a genius since she was little.”

It’s actually not ingenuity but the knowledge retained from her past life, but she hasn’t told Lulu this, has she?

Well, whatever. It’s a rare opportunity to be able to talk like this.

“How were you able to tell?”

“Let’s see, for example—”

Though it all goes through an “Arisa is Great” filter, I don’t bother correcting or rejecting anything Lulu says, and let her talk as much as she likes.

Perhaps not having spoken this much for a long time, she catches a coughing fit, and I pass her the waterskin.

So, until nearly noon, I listened to Lulu talk pridefully about Arisa.

Looking up in response to distant thunder, I see dark gray clouds already hovering above the mountains.

Though I think we still have a few hours, we should do what we came here for before rain falls.

“So, why don’t we start the driving practice?”

“Yes! Sorry, I’ve been talking about Arisa so much...”

After comforting Lulu who’s a bit embarrassed from her excitement, practice starts.

Of course, the very moment I start driving the carriage under Lulu’s direction—

>>> Skill obtained「Driving」

>>> Title obtained「Chauffeur」

—I obtained the skill just like that, so I slowly added Skill Points to raise the skill’s level in accordance with the difficulty of the lesson.

I didn’t immediately max it partly to take Lulu’s feelings as the coach into account, and partly to spend a little more time together to improve our communication.

Through the idle chatter, I also learn important things to note about driving.

Although the「Driving」skill teaches me exactly how to drive, but it won’t tell me why I have to drive that way.

So I relied on Lulu to fill me in on that.

Still, Lulu seems to only have driven inside a town, so I should find an experienced driver to give me a lecture before we depart!

Every time thunder booms from afar, the distance between me and Lulu decreases.

Lulu is afraid of the thunder, probably.

As a white flash illuminates the mountains, she gives off a small shriek and grabs my arm.

If she were Arisa or anyone else, they might have gone closer to check out the thunder after hearing it.

Suddenly, I feel something staring from the patch of trees nearby, so I look over.

There's no one there. The「Radar」also reveals nothing of interest. There are only birds or other small animals— wait, there is one owl.

Once again, lightning strikes and the owl casts an eerie shadow against the light on the gray clouds.

Just when I thought the owl looks me in the eye, it seems to lose interest in us and lands on a carriage entering「Seiryuu City」, leaving my sight.

"Uh, um, goshujin-sama?"

Since I fell silent, Lulu has become uneasy once again.

It was a rare opportunity for her to chat freely, but now sitting through all that praise for Arisa is in vain.

"Sorry, I saw a large bird in the trees and got curious."

"An eagle?"

"No, it's a bit rounder, maybe an owl or something?"

I make up an offhand answer, trying to once again ease the tense atmosphere.

◆

Back inside the city, when we reach the All-Round Agency, the sharp-eyed Tama spots us from the second-floor window and waves.

I was going to wave back, but she immediately moves away from the window, and my left hand end up hanging there.

I awkwardly direct the giggling Lulu to drive the carriage to Gateside Inn.

Yeah, she certainly seems to have relaxed a bit!

“Goshujin-sama~?”

“Welcome back, nano desu!”

I catch the nearly-tumbling Pochi and Tama as they run to me. Following them are Arisa and Mia, who is being supported by Liza.

“Satou.”

“Hi, Mia. Can you walk around now?”

“Mn, potion.”

“Thanks to the potion that the Manager brought, it seems. It was my first time seeing it. Potions are quite amazing!”

Arisa helps to fill the holes in Mia’s words.

Checking the map, I see the Manager on the second floor of the All-Round Agency. I suppose while we were outside, the Manager returned.

“It’s great that you’re feeling better.”

“Mn, grateful.”

Mia seems to be anticipating something, while Arisa stands behind her, pointing at her head.

Mia’s hair is a little different today. Her hair that had flowed freely behind her back is now tied on both sides into twin tails.

I see, she wants me to compliment her on that.

“Nice hair today, it suits you well!”

“Mn.”

Mia replies somewhat sheepishly when I praise her.

Arisa then suggests getting some good food to celebrate Mia’s recovery, so I ask the person herself what she wants.

“Honey pastry.”

Not expecting an immediate answer, I am a bit late in my response.

Probably thinking I wasn't going to accept, Arisa adds.

"When she heard about the honey pastry that Pochi and Tama had, she was quite interested!"

"Liza had it too no desu!"

"Taste of sweet happiness~"

Perhaps having been reminded of the taste, Pochi and Tama are clasping their own cheeks contently.

"If possible, I would like to have Mia and everyone else try it too."

I get it. Mia is just the excuse, Arisa actually just want to try it herself, huh.

Since it's not anything expensive, I give Lulu and Liza some「Silver Coins」and ask them to get more pastries than the number of people here.

I could have Arisa and everyone else go too, but Mia might tag along despite having just recovered, so I sent only the two of them.

Suddenly, Tama looks up at the roof of the Gateside Inn.

"What is it no desu?"

"Mew~ That bird is weird~?"

Looking at the owl perched at the top of the building, Tama tilts her head.

—Is that the same one Lulu and I saw while doing driving practice?

Under everyone's gazes, the owl flies away again.

"Hello, Nadi-san, is the Manager in?"

"My, welcome back, Satou-san. Boss is with Mize-san!"

Who's Mize— ah, I remember. Red Helm, yeah?

After thanking Nadi-san, I head to the second floor.

The kids are huddled around the table of the sofa set downstairs, playing their flash card game. They sure enjoy playing that game.

Since it feels like it's about to rain, no one is coming to this store, but I still warn them not to bother Nadi-san too much.

After tapping on the door, I enter the room.

If it were a woman's or a teenage boy's room, I would wait for a reply, but since there are only men inside, I just enter.

Seeing me come in, the Manager raises his hand as a greeting.

"Satou."

"Zatoe? Jou, jou're me savior, huh—"

I accept Red Helm's thanks. His strange pronunciation wasn't due to his injuries it seems, but actually a matter of oral physiology, just like the dogman children I met before.

I try asking Red Helm about the「Shadow Stalkers」that attacked, and why Mia was with him.

Of course, I know that I am sticking my nose where it doesn't belong again, and I'd drop the matter if they didn't want to talk, but unexpectedly, they spill the beans.

They tell me about how Mia was kidnapped from her home in the Elf village by a magician, taken to a facility known as the「Cradle」, coincidentally picked up by Red Helm when she escaped the facility through a teleportation device, then ran to「Seiryuu City」in hopes of getting help from the Manager.

As for why Red Helm happened to be there, he said that he was there to investigate whether the vegetation on a mountain near his tribe is withering due to the「Cradle」.

The reason Red Helm calls Mia, who is of a completely unrelated species, "princess", turns out to be a habit he picked up when he trained in the Elf village.

It's still unknown why the Magician kidnapped Mia. The Manager seems to know something, but I'll let it go if he doesn't want to say.

Also, when they were chased by the Magician's「Large Fang Ants」and

「Flying Ants」, he snuck into the city with the help of some criminals he had dealt with.

The Flying Ants that attacked「Seiryuu City」were sent by that Magician, huh.

By the way, the compensation seems to have been rock salt that can be found near his tribe.

—-Right, I have to talk to the Manager about escorting Mia back home.

“Manager, actually—”

Cutting off the sentence I just started, thunder outside the window and screaming from Nadi-san and others downstairs reach my ears at the same time.

“Nadi!”

The Manager swiftly darts out of the room.

I quickly follow him. Behind me, Red Helm does the same.

Coming down the stairs, I see Nadi-san and the girls all hugging one another.

“What is it?!”

“B-, Boss...”

Red Helm readies himself, staring intently at the entrance of the store.

However, my「Radar」isn’t showing any hostile units at all.

There doesn’t seem to be a problem, other than Arisa crying uncle and flailing on Pochi and Tama, who are hugging her tightly from each side and suffocating her.

While Arisa is still breathing, I peel Pochi and Tama off of her.

“What’s the mat—”

Thunder overpowers my voice.

At the same time, the light drizzle turns into a storm, covering the view outside in a veil.

Covered in little girls, I sink back into the sofa, having understood why they screamed.

Nadi-san and the kids had screamed simply because they were afraid of thunder.

The Manager lights up the store with magic.

The light reveals the terrified-yet-satisfied of Nadi-san who is hugging the Manager. “Riajuus explode!” I curse in my mind while smiling wryly at them. [^Riajuu]

I can deal with Arisa and Mia grabbing my arms, and even Tama who’s curled up on my lap with her claws out, but Pochi desperately hugging my face is a little much. Ouch, it hurts when she pulls on my hair. [^facehugger]

I pick up Pochi and let her sit on my lap with Tama.

“Th-, the thunder person is scary no desu!”

“So bright, so loud~”

“He makes things pitch-black no desu!”

“Trees split in half~?”

Slightly hysterical, the teary-eyed Pochi and Tama are waving their arms recounting how scary thunder is. They’re that scared, huh.

What’s more— “Thunder is dangerous, a danger you know? Azé said even a dragon would fall out of the sky when struck by thunder, it will fall, alright?”

—Who’s the person telling me all this?

As if her previous reticence were a lie, Mia is talking a mile a minute.

I’ve never heard the name before, but could this Azé be Mia’s mother?

“So Arisa, you’re afraid of thunder too?”

“...C-, can’t I?”

So scared, she bit her tongue, huh. With her face all pale, Arisa had dived under my arm and held me tight.

I suspected this to be her usual sexual harassment, but since she is twitching every time thunder strikes, I was probably mistaken.

Still grabbing onto my chest, Tama turns her head around to look at something in the rain outside.

“What is it?” I try to ask Tama, but the sound was drowned out by an even louder thunder strike.

Illuminated by the lightning, a faint shadow is barely visible. The Radar also reveals an approaching dot.

Diving through the shower, a large owl swoops in and lands on the counter.

—-It’s the same owl. Is it getting out of the rain?

It stares at Mia with its beady eyes.

The AR tells me information on this owl. It’s a species called「Shadow Owl」. Seems to be the same kind Red Helm saw before.

More importantly, its title is actually「Zen’s Familiar」. A real-life familiar, how fantastical.

Only, familiars are the subordinates of a magician.

If that’s the case, the master of this owl is likely the Magician who kidnapped Mia.

And this Magician’s name is Zen, I’m guessing.

Speaking of which, I have heard that name before— Ahh, it’s the main character of the play I watched with Zena-san and everyone. That romantic tragedy was based on the true story, so is this just a coincidence? After all, Zen, the protagonist magician in that drama, should have been executed.

I brush aside the useless information.

Dealing with this familiar should be the priority. I search the Map for the Magician controlling it, but he’s not in「Seiryuu City」or even anywhere in the county.

—Where is he operating this from?

Well, let’s capture this familiar first.

If we don’t take out the Magician’s eyes and ears, there’s no telling when he’ll send more monsters again.

Keeping my eyes on the owl, I hand Pochi and Tama sitting on my lap to Arisa and Mia, then get up from the sofa to keep the four of them hidden behind me.

The magical light is casting an elongated shadow behind the owl.

When *that guy* begins to burst out from the shadow that extends into the rain, everything stops in its tracks, as if frozen in time.

—Terror.

Yes, that guy is the embodiment of terror.

We have forgotten how to blink, completely drowning in fear. Not even the slightest bit of resistance surfaces.

Scream and scramble away— that I cannot possibly do, thanks to my last shred of pride and the sense of responsibility. In order to protect the girls behind me, I am able to remain conscious.

After an infinitesimal blackout, my terror thins out slightly.

—Was that Arisa's「Mind Magic」?

I open the「Menu」with what faculty I have left.

While resenting the grogginess that is making me feel like an old PC, I open my「Skills」tab and scroll to the one I'm looking for.

After what feels like an eternity, I finally see it.

—The「Fear Resistance」skill.

As soon as I toggle it with a thought from「Disabled」to「Enabled」—time starts moving again.

The sudden clarity is astounding.

Like a waning tide, my tunnel vision slowly expands.

The silenced sound of the rain has returned as well.

It felt like dozens of minutes, but not even been a tenth of a second had passed since that guy's appearance.

The evidence? That guy is still emerging from the owl's shadow.

The opponent that appeared to be a colossal giant, I now know to be not

much taller than me.

A hunchbacked man wearing a worn-out brown robe. The hood is pulled past his eyes, so his face is still hidden.

That guy did not fly in like his owl, but rather appeared from nowhere.

As if he really did crawl out from the shadow, a white dot had appeared on the Radar. It has since become red.

I don't know the exact mechanism, but surely it was magic.

My eyes rest on the AR display next to that guy.

His name is Zen, with a Level as high as 41. Skills—「Unknown」.

Not a good sign. That guy is the same as Arisa and the Hero, isn't he?

Before I can finish reading, the Magician Zen, taking a step forward, takes a sidelong glance at us, before focusing his eyes on Mia.

Was it just me, or did his eyes briefly pause on Arisa and me?

“I'm here to pick you up nodayo, Mia.” [^Nodayo]

Upon hearing his deathly voice that seems to have come from the deep abyss, I feel Mia giving a jolt and gripping my sleeve tightly.

This man is no doubt the Magician who kidnapped Mia.

Under his hood, it is pitch-black as if the magical light is being completely absorbed. The only things visible are two small, ghostly, violet flames.

In place of the terrified Mia, I confront him.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Magician-dono. I am Satou, a merchant.”

“Humph, I have no business with a merchant nodayo.”

Zen spits venomously.

“Still, as expected of a Hero’s descendant. It’s incredible how you can still speak calmly despite bathing in my terror nodayo.”

—Who’s the descendant of a Hero?

If he deduced that from my name and black hair, then this guy really is…

“I am going to let you off easy, but I won’t forgive any insolence, understood?”

I suppose he is now going to put some weight behind those words. Zen places his hand on the wooden reception counter, which starts to turn black and decay where he touched it.

Not sure whether it was magic or some magical tool, but it's definitely dangerous to touch him. I can probably withstand it for some time with the skill「Decomposition Resistance」, but I have no intention of testing it.

When facing magicians in any game, the biggest threat would be their area-of-effect spell attacks, but since his objective is to abduct Mia, it should be fine to not guard against that.

"I do wish to avoid any conflicts, but Mia is a friend. I cannot stand by idly when she is being abducted against her will."

"Would you still say the same thing, when one of your hand rots away like this table?"

Zen walks past the disintegrating counter and steps closer.

"No matter what, you are unwilling to concede?"

"Foolish question. If you want to protect Mia, show me your courage. My madness can't be stopped with mere words, you know?"

Then, as you wish!

While taking care not to stomp through the stone-tile floor, I swing at that guy's solar plexus, aiming for a one-hit KO.

I used the skill「Close Combat」to realize the Chinese Kempo technique I had seen in a manga.

If I punch too hard, it will become a one-hit kill, so I also apply the skill「Kidnapping」to control the power.

—So light.

Though the strike was only intended to stop near the surface with no followthrough, this weightless sensation can't be right.

Looking over, I see my own fist having gone through Zen's translucent body.

“What?!”

As I am in shock, something wraps around my ankle, suddenly drawing me upwards.

My view becomes overturned. With the help of「Vertical Maneuvering」though, I can still look around without my inner ear going out of whack.

The giant that has taken me by the ankle is countless black tentacles that are extending from Zen’s shadow.

—This guy can manipulate shadows!

Though I don’t seem to have taken any damage, the angle I’m held up by still stings.

Just like with me or Arisa, the biggest threat with magic cast without chanting is the inability to anticipate it.

>>> Skill obtained「Shadow Magic」

>>> Skill obtained「Shadow Resistance」

What the heck is「Shadow Resistance」? Though I would like to question what it is, but this really isn’t the time. I add skill points to the「Shadow Resistance」skill, in order to help guard against such ridiculous magic.

As the「Shadow Resistance」skill kicks in, the stinging sensation at my angle subsides.

“What a surprise nodayo. A fighter disguised as a merchant, huh. What’s more, to move with such agility at your level, it’s really quite an eye-opener nodayo.”

“I didn’t know there were magicians who can control shadows, so we’re even.”

It’s silly to keep speaking politely against a hostile opponent, so I talk frankly.

The level displayed by my「Social」tab is so low that I'm being looked down upon, huh. The benefit is that my opponent has underestimated me, but such a thing is pointless right now...

"Still adamant even in this situation, huh. I'm impressed nodayo."

A new shadow emerges next to Zen, morphing into a fist.

It's going to hurt if that hits me. I reach into the pockets on my robe, planning to pull out the「Magic Gun」from「Storage」.

"Leave goshujin-sama alonnnne!"

Arisa lets out a desperate shriek. At the same time, some sort of pressure passes through the right side of my body.

According to the「Log」, she had used the「Mind Magic」spell「Shockwave」.

For only a second, Zen stumbles backward.

However, that guy's Health and Stamina do not decrease at all. There was only a knock-back.

The hood falls off of Zen's head, revealing his appearance underneath.

—His face is all bone.

In place of eyeballs, purple flames sit within his empty eye sockets.

If I didn't have「Fear Resistance」, I might have screamed.

I continue my perusal of Zen's status that has been interrupted.

"...A wraith?"

Nadi-san's raspy voice can be heard.

Apparently, Arisa had used the spell「Remove Fear」before attacking, clearing everyone's status afflictions.

Nadi-san's deduction is reasonable, but that guy isn't an opponent that simple.

"Conflating me with such low-level Undead monsters. How irritating nodayo."

Zen glares at Nadi-san, fuming.

Then, he releases the shadowy fist he had prepared for me toward Nadi-san.

I twist around in mid-air, pulling out my「Magic Gun」from「Storage」to cut off the fist.

The mana bullet makes contact and shatters the fist, but the shadow that makes up the base still maintains momentum and approaches Nadi-san.

I try to fire a second shot, but the .1-second lag stops me.

“Nadi!”

The Manager, putting himself in front of Nadi-san and raising his staff, starts to chant a spell.

The shadow smashes the Manager's staff, then slams into his chest.

—That gives me an idea.

I pull one foot out of the shadow that was wrapped around it, then stomp on the shadow wrapping my other foot.

After dislodging myself in the blink of an eye, I punch the shadow that is about to strike both the Manager and Nadi-san.

“Absurd! Yeah, ‘Absurd!’ nodayo!”

Pulling my fist out of the stone tiles that I smashed along with the shadow, I stand back up.

I had been mistaken about not being able to touch the shadows.

But if the shadows can touch us, there should be no doubt the opposite is true—

“The Shadow Whips created by「Shadow Magic」shouldn't be tangible without magic or magical items.”

—Or not.

Good thing I haven't announced that with a smug face. I nearly made a faux-pas.

Anyway, the Manager's Health is critically low after being struck in the chest.

In order to catch the Manager who had been sent flying by the destroyed shadow's momentum, Nadi-san was knocked out as well.

“We won't give up Princess.”

Red Helm picks up the Manager's broken staff and stands beside me.

Behind me, Arisa whispers instructions to Pochi and Tama.

“Pochi, Tama, I'll make an opening, so take Mia and escape out the back. Can you do that?”

“We'll fight together no desu!”

“Beat up bones~?”

“No good, we can't win against that guy. His level is too high.”

Then, Mia shaking denies Arisa's proposal.

“...Fine. Escape.”

“What do you mean, ‘Leave you and escape’? We wouldn't be your friends if we leave you here! Our master wants to let you escape, so that's why we're doing this.”

If Arisa weren't a little girl I'd fall in love right there.

“But.”

“Butt, my ass. I'll create the perfect opportunity, so you just focus on escaping.” [^butt]

That Arisa, is she planning on using her Unique Skill? Also, there’s no way I could have pictured a little girl using such a passé phrase.

If her skill can get past even my defenses, it should be effective against someone who’s only Level 41.

Well, I have to do something first, though.

“Magician-dono. Could you be so kind as to tell us uneducated folks as to what you really are?”

I raise my「Magic Gun」while asking Zen.

Actually, I already know what he is. As the AR reveals, this guy is, in fact, a「Null-Life King」.

An Undead that is on the same level as the infamous “Lich King” and “True Vampire”.

“Hmm. Sometimes he’s a merchant; sometimes he’s a fighter; but his true identity is a gunman, huh.” [^movie]

Zen does not answer my question, and instead makes an outdated reference in Arisa’s fashion, then starts laughing by himself, his fleshless jaw clacking.

“Perhaps I have even more identities.”

If I must say, I prefer the identity Alternate World Tourist.

“Interesting. O Satou, I’ll make you a ‘Hero’ too—”

“Goshujin-sama, Mr. Mouse, get down!”

Before Zen can finish his sentence, Arisa’s voice cuts in.

“Fire awayyyy!”

Just as I fall back, Arisa yells.

An invisible attack hits Zen square in the face.

Zen falters— and that was it.

“That was dangerous. To think you had a Unique Skill! And, that hair! So you are a Transmigrator as well, huh. I did not notice that wig you were wearing.”

As well, he says. As I suspected, Zen really is a Transmigrator, huh.

“Grr, you Resisted.”

Arisa staggers and sinks into the sofa. That shot just now consumed all of her Stamina and Mana.

The girls gather around the unconscious Arisa, calling her name in concern.

Red Helm, who could not back off in time, is now out cold, with fluid leaking from his eyes and mouth. He isn’t in mortal danger but might retain some side effects if we don’t do anything.

Taking advantage of the opening Arisa created, I aim above that guy’s shoulder and pull the Magic Gun’s trigger.

I’m still not comfortable with firing at someone, but with his ghastly Undead appearance, I can, at least, manage a warning shot.

The magical bullet shoots toward that guy but is stopped short by a magical barrier in front of him. It looks like some sort of nearly transparent black glass.

The Magic Gun is also ineffective huh…

Even then, I can’t cast「Fire Shot」indoors like this. If I’m not careful,

the whole place will burn down.

—I could probably win with the「Sacred Sword」or the「Divine Sword」in「Storage」, but I'm afraid I might kill him right then and there with that kind of power.

Despite seemingly just a vengeful spirit, if I kill an opponent capable of reason, I don't think I would be able to sleep soundly at night ever again.

If he were inherently an "Enemy of Humanity" like Wagahai Guy or the Eyeball Demon I wouldn't hesitate this much...

"Using an intractable power will only bring destruction. If you don't want that girl to become god's plaything, don't let her use that Unique skill anymore."

"I will remind her once she wakes up."

While listening to Zen's warning, I try to think of a way out.

"That is good. Then I'll be going."

—Giving up on Mia?

Zen's simple declaration of retreat makes me relax, but the screams of Mia and the others behind me make me turn around in panic once more.

"No strength~?"

"Let go, nano desu!"

"Satou!"

Pochi and Tama have been hung up in the air by「Shadow Whips」.

Calling out my name in agony, Mia has been bound by countless「Shadow Whips」, and is already sinking into the shadow.

Pochi and Tama have been drained of their Stamina and dropped onto the sofa. Alright, they're unhurt.

—Gotta save Mia first.

"Mia!"

While apologizing to Pochi and Tama in my mind, I dive toward Mia.

I grab hold of the「Shadow Whips」wrapped around Mia to rip them apart, but they merely stretch like rubber bands, unable to be torn at all.

In that case, I try shooting the「Shadow Whips」wrapped around Mia one by one with my Magic, but the shadow immediately grows more「Shadow Whips」, and I'm unable to keep up.

I cast aside the「Magic Gun」, and grab onto Mia herself to pull her out from the shadow, but the strength of the「Shadow Whips」is bigger than I thought.

Mia is making painful cries.

My strength seems to be a bit stronger, but Mia's Health is dropping. If I keep pulling, I might rip her apart.

"It's no use nodayo."

While descending into the shadow under his feet, Zen comments on my desperate resistance.

Arisa has picked up the「Magic Gun」to shoot Zen, but a black barrier once again blocks the shot.

"The futility of trying to defeat a superior being like me is just an unreasonable rule of this world nodayo. If you really do not fear death, come visit me in the「Cradle」. I expect to see you get there using every bit of your wisdom and courage nodayo!"

Having said what he wanted, Zen disappears completely into the shadow. Why he didn't personally make sure Mia has also gone in, I don't know whether it's confidence or neglect.

My own body shows signs of being sucked into the shadow, but not any more than one centimeter, likely due to Resistance.

"Goshujin-sama!"

"Arisa!"

Having just gotten back at the store, Liza and Lulu can't help but scream out after seeing the sorry state of the store. [^plothole]

—I’ve steeled my resolve.

“Liza! Lulu! Please find someone to heal everybody. Ex-priest Horn or Zena-san will do!”

With that said, I toss a small bag full of coins to Liza. Viscount Belton’s insignia is printed on it. It might come in handy if necessary.

“Don’t worry about me. I’ll definitely return with Mia!”

Without waiting for their response, I dive right into the shadow with Mia.

———————————

[^skills]: Before you say anything about Xianxia, this is referring to the literal act of cultivating land. Yeah, those skill names seem vague as hell, but it should be fairly obvious that they are related to farming and working on land in general.

[^watercan]: It's a kettle (ケトル) that serves as a kettle (やかん)? I fail to see the significance here.

[^strays]: “Grateful for chicken kebabs.” “Thank you for chicken kebabs.” “It was delicious.”

[^riajuu]: A “riajuu” (リア充) is someone leading a fulfilling (充実) life in reality (リア). Basically, the antithesis to otakus. Used with humorous exaggeration here, obviously.

[^facehugger]: But how could he see when Pochi is all over his face?

[^movie]: Apparently a quote from the Showa-era movie [Bannai Tarao (1978)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bannai_Tarao). Speaking of which, I remember the WN saying he came from a different time period...

[^butt]: Joke lost in translation. The word “で” (but/however) sounds like “デモ” (demonstration), so Arisa says “デモもストも無い”, literally “There’s neither demonstrations nor strikes”. This is apparently a popular saying in

the Showa Era, by the way.

[^sweets]: Not sure if this is intentional wordplay, but “お返し *okaeshi* (repayment)” was pronounced as “おかぁし *okaashi*”, which sounds like “お菓子 *okashi* (sweets)”.

[^acorn]: More accurately, it is probably (based on) a [chinkapin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castanopsis) nut, which looks like a pointy acorn. (シイの実) [^nodayo]: His verbal tic isn’t always there, but it does have some significance to the setting. Readers of the web novel are probably aware.

[^plothole]: This could be a plot hole. Wouldn’t they be stuck somewhere on the way back due to either the storm or Lulu’s fear of lightning? Unless, the storm is entirely Zen’s doing and was very localized...

[^night]: I’ll admit: I made the names up. It just feels kinda awkward otherwise, although doing it this way is kinda pretentious. Anyway, these mean “first/second/last [part of the] night”, and the corresponding kanji say “夜一刻”, “夜二刻”, and “夜終刻”. I don’t actually know Latin, so they could be grammatically wrong. [[ED Options: Fixed, and now it is grammatically correct Latin]]

[^scope]: The night vision goggle [AN/PVS-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AN%2FPVS-4) is known as the “Starlight Scope”.

[^ratface]: If you read *My Hero Academia*, this guy probably looks similar to the [principal](http://bokunoheroacademia.wikia.com/wiki/Nedzu). Also, his face is apparently “nihilistic” (ニヒルな), whatever that means...

[^yobai]: If you don’t remember what I said before, this is something like an one-night stand kind of thing.

[^bl]: BL is short for “Boy’s Love”, a genre about homosexual romance/eroticism that’s usually targeted toward women. I’m not sure what ‘Dragon × Snake’ is, but I can guess that it has something to do with

trouser snakes... Sure as hell not gonna Google *that*. [[ED Options: I have confirmed that it is NSFW ;-;]] (M: Let us thank Options for his noble sacrifice...) [^teaching]: What's the difference between this and the skill "Taming"?! I thought Satou would say something like that… [[ED Options: Well he is a game dev. so he probably knows the difference taming and teaching]] (M: He did question why he got Taming rather than Teaching in 1-5 though) [^cheese]: What happened to the scene with cheese?

[^cards]: [[ED Options: So here is the game they are talking about https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_(game)]]

[^speech]: [[ED Options: All the intentional mistake is reflecting on the ratman's injury, as he is injured his sense of speech is giving up on him. Please do not shame me for the intentional ones ;-;]]

[^charter]: [[ED Options: So just in case you don't know, passenger carriages are like taxi, while charter carriages are like bus that go to other cities]]

[^scooby]: [[ED Options: the original was this:沈丁花じゃないけど、これもありね！ but tbh it could be both Scooby's Daphne or Daphne in the blue if anyone has any ideas please leave a comment :3]]

[^fighting]: [[ED Options: It can be any fighting game reference. Street Fighter E. Honda is the best example though]]

(with tl notes)

Death March 2-6 w/ tln

Chapter 6: Torasayuya's Cradle

-Translator: MiaoMix [Comments will be in Pink]

-Translator: Options [Comments will be in Blue]

-Editor: Alex [Comments will be in Purple]

>>Satou here. Information often becomes distorted when passing from person to person. This has nothing to do with intent; distortion is inevitable as long as it goes through 'someone else'. <<

I dove into a pitch black void.

Without any light or sound, it's like being submerged in shadow. Of course, there's no air either.

...This isn't gonna be good. Both my Health and Mana are decreasing slowly but surely, but likely thanks to my「Self Healing」skill, they jump back up every now and then.

…I don't think I can even die from suffocation anymore.

Even if there was air, staying in a place like this for too long could make someone insane.

The feeling of hypoxia is keeping me from focusing on my thoughts.

—Right, Mia.

I can't even see my own body; so naturally, Mia's silhouette is nowhere to be found. Even if I try to reach out and feel around, it's fruitless in a

place where I can't even tell up from down .

I took out the「Tinder Rod」from「Storage」and pressed the ignition. I thought this would let me see myself, but I still couldn't.

The「Radar」is also only displaying me.

I try to use「Full Map Exploration」for the first time in a while. Unfortunately, the Radar remains unchanged. I seem to really be the only one here.

I open up the Map.

One line is written on top—「No Map Available for this Area」.

"What kind of game is this?!"

I yell with all my strength.

Then, as if reacting to my roar, the soundless void of shadow shatters, and its glass-like shards slowly fade away.

◆

It was a place called the「Audience Chamber」and was filled with a lot of symbols.

The deep, spacious hall is as large as several school gymnasiums placed end-to-end. Under my feet is a stone floor, while giant columns stand along the walls. The lampstands on the columns sport LED-like magical lights that illuminate the whole room.

Atop a more elevated section, a throne sits with a two-meter wide pulsing red gem floating near it at knee-level. It looks just like a magic core that has been enlarged.

—There!

Mia can be seen sleeping on the throne.

An unknown blonde beauty is tending to Mia. Her appearance is quite similar to Mia's. I suppose that's what she will look like when she's older.

Still, that body has quite outrageous breasts. About D, or even E cups.

(Ofcourse its the first thing you notice, remember Satou is a Boobman) Wait, that's not important at all right now.

Before I am able to run up, Zen, while endlessly tapping on some music stand-like device near the throne, notices my presence.

"But how?!"

Despite his shock, the man's hand operating the music stand does not slow down.

"Not bad! But how?' How did you escape from my prison of shadow? A lowly commoner like you, your hands should be tied against this!"

(I just realized: he ends his sentences in "*なのだよ nano dayo*". Basically, his speech pattern is the male version of Pochi's. As you can see, +0 to Charm.) (I still love it tho, it adds character)

Is that shock, boasting, or mockery? Just pick one.

Perhaps due to the「Shadow Void」just now, my two legs are still a bit weak.

"I have a Medallion of Light, so Shadow Magic is useless against me."

Shit, I wasn't going to tell the truth, but this excuse is too ridiculous. Has my Deception skill gone haywire?

"The trial must be done fairly. Cheating cannot be tolerated. This chamber is reserved for people who have conquered the「Cradle」. That is the rule."

Having said that, Zen pauses to nod in agreement with himself.

"You think you are a Game Master?"

If he wanted a death game, I wish he would make his own VR game himself.

(Possibly a jab at SAO Ainclad arc) “A shame you’d take this to be a game! Indeed, no one will die in this Cradle, but it’s no game.”

—No one will die? What’s that about?

“Only the Hero who has come here after a successful conquest has the right to slay I, the Null-Life King.”

This guy, what the heck is he saying?

He wants someone to conquer the「Cradle」and kill him?

This guy is pissing me off. He caused trouble for Mia and my kids while injuring the Manager for a reason like that?

“Go kill yourself if you want to die. Don’t drag others into it.”

“Huahahaha, as long as I have「God’s Blessing」, I’ll always be immortal.”

For some reason, Zen’s words seem to contain quite a bit of nuance. As if the “blessing” is actually a “curse” to him.

It was unpleasant listening to him, but his long rambling has allowed me to steady my two legs.

I cover around forty meters in mere moments, arriving in front of Mia. Rescuing Mia is the priority right now.

Just as my hand nearly reaches Mia’s clothes, Zen’s hands that have been busy operating the console stop.

“Now, isn’t it about time you leave the master chamber?”

◆

The feeling under my feet has changed.

What’s more important is that the view in front of my eyes has changed even more.

I barely stop myself at the edge of the cliff that suddenly appeared. The

ground beneath my feet start to crumble from me digging up the dirt, but I quickly jump backward slightly outside of range.

“Where’s this place?”

I mumble to myself as no one replied.

Apparently, I have been teleported by magic or something. It seems to be different from Zen’s ability to move through shadows. Where have I been sent to?

Looking at the vast scenery around me, this seems to be the summit of a mountain.

Under the cliff in front of my eyes, there is a basin the size of Sieryuu City, with a group of mountains surrounding it.

The Basin is full of fog, I can’t see clearly. The distant tall tree almost has no leaves, only long withered branches.

There is a Bright Light outside the surrounding mountains, doesn’t look like there are monsters inside either.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes I opened my eyes to see the view.

—Yeah, still there.

This time, I closed my eyes and started counting, to let my heart calm down.

And opened my eyes with determination, but the scenery is the same.

—So, it really wasn’t an illusion, huh.

I look at the gigantic tree in the middle of the basin.

It looks better than the other giant tree.

Strangest thing is that the tree is as tall as the surrounding mountains.

“Isn’t that the so-called Yggdrasil?”

In spite the size of the tree, it doesn’t have any sign of toppling over. Still,

it's better to let the next generation of researchers to unlock the mystery, I have things I need to do.

Looking at the side of the Yggdrasil, there is an AR displaying 「Torasayuya's Cradle」.

The Large tree has spider-web like silk on it. Although the branches are hiding the web below, the silk definitely looks like a path.

I need to head to where Mia is and rescue her, the place must be inside the tree.

I opened the map, looks like this is a place called 「Grey Rat Village」. Luckily, it's near Seiryuu City, but after rescuing Mia I don't think we can come back here.

I used "Search All Map" to investigate 「Grey Rat Village」, the first thing to do is to find a good path to return to.

The distance to the near the nearest Ratmen town is over two mountains, so even if I use Meteor it would do too much damage.

In front of my eyes are the stairs to the 「Cradle」. It's a few steps by the cliff side from before.

This set of stairs is floating in the air, made out of glass panels linked together, mostly by magic. But there isn't anything to hold on to in the air and it's approximately 3 meters high. Due to the lack of handles, one strong wind can make you fall to the bottom of the valley.

The normal me would never take a step forward, but activating the ability 「Resist Fear」 stopped my feeling of fear and helped me hold on.

——This sure is dangerous.

I might forget to turn 「Resist Fear」 off after finishing this.

While going up the straight glass staircase, I suddenly hear sounds of wings flapping.

I turn my head to the origin of the noise to discover a bee monster near

my location Since it's still a bit far, the radar didn't display it.

I opened the Map, this place is no longer「Grey Rat Village」but it's in「Torasayuya's Cradle」area now.

I hurried and used「Search All Map」to find out every detail and information about「Torasayuya's Cradle」.

The AR is now displaying information about the nearby monster bee.

This Species is called「Red Needle Bee」, the level is a bit low, though it is poisonous. I went to my Storage to bring out a magic gun and take them down before they get closer to me.

The usual Magic gun is kept in the All Function House, so this one is a spare.

I quickly skimmed over the intel about the tree on the map display.

If Zen finds out, there's big chance he'll say I'm cheating.

Even though I can just climb the tree and be done with it, and the teleport ability by the「Cradle」deemed it meaningless.

Guess I can only follow the rules and go in.

If the Objective is something else, one Meteor can end this in one go, but in exchange for Mia's safety, a little hardship is unavoidable.

"What is that?"

I know the entrance is going to have an epic door.

But the sign next to the entrance got me confused.

On top, there are words in elf language written the place's name and walkthrough. The bottom has precautions in bolded words in a 5 languages.

It says on top —— This is a training facility designed for elves, any other race than elf will need to notice that the protection device will not activate.

(skills?)(Probably?) Training Facility will not limit anyone's usage, please be responsible for your own actions.

If the Training Facility destroyed or damaged your items, there will be no

compensation.

—— is what's written on it.

Looks like this is a wood style maze for training elves.

Although there is something like a life protection device, I still shouldn't destroy the「Cradle」with this together. If the facility is destroyed, the life protection device can't protect Mia.

Zen said that this is a Null-death facility, but right now there is no way to know if he will expand the protection to lives other than the elves.

from the looks of the map, the tree truck's inside is the maze. and the man-made spider web things are the training facility's main body.

There is some erosion on the bark and the tree truck, but it's only a very little percentage of it.

Through the big door, there is a magic being waiting in front of me.

There is a title saying「Monster of the Wandering Tunnel」, so it is probably not an ambush, but a single encounter battle.

The magic being is a meter tall and looks like an imp.

I first thought it was a wannabe Goblin, but the AR display shows a different name「Weed Imp」from the looks of it, it's a group of weed imitating the body of a goblin.

(not cannabis, the normal weed) I went up and kicked it. The weed fell apart with a very light swoosh sound. Its level is probably just one. I'm too lazy to pick up the white magic core it dropped, so I just left it there.

The「Cradle」has a total of two hundred floors, every ten floors is a unit, with twenty massive spiral staircases connected to the next level.

In front of me is the first spiral staircase, in front of the stairs are eight doors connected the other floor's entrance.

There is a monument before the stairs written「Number 1 Big Staircase」

The walls of the roofless massive room that the stairs were placed in

have countless amounts of branches sticking out, growing out glowing lanterns shaped things.

Not only does the branch have a light source, it's also growing all kinds of fruit.

But there are apples, oranges and pears growing on the same branch, it might not be very natural. It's as if a researcher from a Sci-fi Film designed this with DNA manipulation.

If it was not for this event, I really want to let my kids train here.

Arriving at the end of the stairs, the level 10 door opened up a ninth hole.

According to the black lithograph's explanation, the door can be opened by defeating each floor's boss to get a jewel called「Key Pearl」and inserting it into the door.

Even though Zen didn't agree, no matter how you look at it, it looks like an RPG game.

In a situation where there is no inserted jewel, the「Door's Guardian」will appear and challenge the trainee.

Since I need to defeat the「Door's Guardian」, I decided to quickly challenge it.

After knocking on the door, the empty place in front of the door generated a magic field of light and a knight in full armor appeared.

According to the AR display, this is a magic being call「Living Armor」.Its level is 10, even though it's stronger than the other magic beings nearby, in my eyes it isn't much different from the imp earlier.

After dodging the「Living Armor」's one-handed axe, I kicked the center of the armor

If I kicked with my toes it would hurt, so I added hip movement and kicked using my heels.

"Ah!"

I used too much power. The idea of defeat opponent with 1 hit is not a bad idea, but I didn't think the armor would be weaker than I thought. Now my leg is sticking out of the armor's back Almost falling over, I put the remains of the「Living Armor」n my inventory before I left.

".....Fooo, that scared me."

I mumbled to myself hiding my embarrassment, and went straight through the now opened door.

Next is at the back of the tree, now I can go towards floor 20's staircase. Really, this kind of config is like a PC game.

This kind...

——of game...?

I was ready to give up, but I stopped.

(He isn't saying he almost gave up literally, he figuratively gave up because he realized what just happened.) This is mostly a misconception. Both「Demon Maze」under the「Seiryuu City」and the「Cradle」have a very rich game style.

(This is a reference to Devil World
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_World
Where it's basically kill something move up kill something move up) Like it's created by someone who's tired of home console RPG games.

——If this is the case...

I opened the map and limited the search range to the 10th floor, searching for magic beings.

——I found it.

On this floor, there is a something with an outrageous level here.

Through the hidden door in the wall, I walked through a water tunnel-like corridor formed by vines.

At the end, there is a 2-meter long vine cocoon.

I need to find the guy and he's inside that cocoon.

If I beat this guy, I can probably get a shortcut straight to the top floor.

Since the designer likes classic maze games, there is definitely a mechanism like this.

With this kind of strong being as a Guardian, a novice player is unable to use the shortcut, but can come back and defeat the guardian after he gets stronger and then use the shortcut to get deeper in the maze with ease. This type of design is cliché.

“Stop hiding and get the hell out here”

Reacting to my voice, the cocoon opens and in the middle there is a glowing green light.

I waited for the Guardian to appear.

“Shut up —— I don’t have enough mana, too lazy to move. Let’s fight next time.”

“Sorry, but I can’t wait”

“God damn it —— I need to report to Toya. I won’t hold back”

(Torasayuya first and last letter) From the green light out comes a green-skinned little girl at the age of 4 or 5, she’s dragging green hair that’s twice as long as she is along the floor.

——Strong Being?

The AR display appear and shows that this is a level 21「Dryad」, as for the exact age, there are too many digits. Compared to Mia, the dryad is much older.

The dryad showed a sleepy expression like she doesn’t seem to know what’s piercing her eyes, she quickly looked at me.

I don’t feel anything hostile, so I went and caught her.

“Human?! Become mine!”

“Huh?"

I stupidly replied, due to the surprise from at her words.

But why is there a question mark added to「Human」? Is level 310 wrong?

“I’m sorry, if you want to propose, let’s wait fourteen of or fifteen years, okay?”(Go search it up on google and click images if you don’t know what looks like)

Why am I always loved by these type of kids and younger girls?

I want to be pursued by sexy big sister type beauties too.

“I’m hungry, give me something to eat.”

“I only have jerky, is that okay?”

All my other food is being kept by Lisa.

Once I get back to「Seiryuu City」, I am going to replenish all kinds of food and snacks.

“I don’t want human food. Give me Mana”

From the AR display , it looks like Dryad’s have「Enchant」,「Absorb mana」,「Absorb magic」and other powers.
A permanent decrease in MP could be bad. but when I said okay, she says “It will only hurt for a bit. You’ll feel okay right away.”

After asking multiple times, I finally found out that it’s like using magic, after a while it will be restored.

Oh, so it’s like that huh. I don’t use magic much anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.

“Hey, I can’t?”

“It’s okay, what do I do?”

“Just like this.”

The little girl puts her hand on my face.

I thought she was going to absorb using her hands, but then she put her lips against mine for a kiss, and stuck her tongue inside my mouth and spun it like a fan.

I completely forgot that, even though her appearance is like a child, she is actually very old.

After 10 or so minutes, I was finally released.

“Woo, I am full.”

The little girl smiles and puffs up her flat chest.

—— Forget it. Sigh, it’s like getting bitten by a small dog.

“As thanks, I’ll help you open up the corridor! You want to use it, right?”

“Yes, thank you.”

This is great, finding the shortcut through my misunderstanding. I can’t be too sad about this.

I lost about 300ish Mana, it’ll take a few minutes to recover so it doesn’t matter, but my heart is pumping quite violently.

I step into the corridor opened by the dryad.

＞＞＞Title received「Dryad’s captive」

I didn’t mean to get this title, I wish I could reject it.

◆

The inside is like a research lab.

It says「Torasayuya’s room」on top of the entrance’s door.

It might have been a long time since this room was last used, this area smells like rotten egg. The floor isn’t stone but made with wood resin.

I think it’s made out of tree sap, like that linen wood floor.

The room has a kitchen, bathroom, and a bedroom prepared inside. I don’t know how many decades have passed, the books have terribly eroded, except for some grimoires. The others will probably crumble if I touch it.

I guess I’ll just put them in the inventory and read it from there.

Moreover, I can just search for them using the menu’s function.

I know it is not the time to read books, but there might a way to hinder that

forced release skill, so I decided to start browsing the books.

As you can guess from the facility's name, the one who made the「Cradle」is actually called Torasayuya. he is just like Mia, an elf, I think the "Toya" the dryad was talking about is the man in question.

The books are all in「Elf Tongue」, and without Mia's「Elf Tongue」ability, I can't understand the books.

The ink in the books is all over the place, so I can only roughly read it.

Looks like this「Cradle」is made by Torasayuya and it's a "Safe area" to nurture elves, so he made it like a maze to protect them.

The journal records his hardship, it talks about his worries for his fellow elves.

『—— Ee the elves are not keen on life. This world is dead-end for us, surprisingly, we didn't have to struggle as hard the other species. A lot of young people sacrifice themselves in the maze, there is a function in the「Cradle」that make a safe route if there is a life threatening situation.』

Other than that, the core of the maze is also the core of the「Cradle」, so it's not like the maze know how to grow itself, but it can absorb magic from the land around to refill the core.

During this time, I found an attention grabbing passage.

『—— and just like that, I finished changing the nurture room into a man-made magic being factory using the creatures inside.』

Magic beings were normal creatures?

Of course, to this day the magic beings I defeated feel like an enlarged or deformed version of their counterpart.

No, there were moving skeletons and other null-death magic items, so this can't be the only explanation.

I stop brainstorming away from the topic and will continue to think about it after this event.

Torasayuya made 3 types of trial assist facilities, a nurturing facility, a productive facility used by giant magic beings, and a servant doll production facility for the normal life style.

Even though he received help from the nearby ratmen, the last couple facilities are abandoned before completion.

According to the information, the food that the magic being are eating is the fruit and sap of the "Cradle's" main tree, so the「Cradle」's magic beings do not go outside of the surrounding area to do any hunting.

However after the「Cradle」was completed, it seems that no other elves visited the place.

The last thing written in his Journal is:

『—— In these short hundred years, everyone still hasn't forgotten about my failure. My short human life is coming to an end. I need to seal the「Cradle」, even though my brethren need it. I believe that one day elves will return to the world —— Torasayuya Bornean』

(Its his last name, honestly for this one WN saved me props to the Sousetsuka eyyy~) His family name is Bornean, as in Mia and the shop keeper's tribe?

I'm afraid this is the reason why Mia is needed here. Anyways, does Zen know the way to unseal the「Cradle」without reading the journal?

In the end, I got a lot of intel, but I still haven't found the way to turn off the forced release.

I noticed a rough sketch that says "Explosion is a type of romance". But there is no moron that would add a self destruct button in a place pursuing safety and nurture.

Seems like I can't go higher from this area, I decided to return to the Dryad's location,

◆

"Ah? You have returned?"

"Ya, I'm back"

I lay down on a bed made of vines, the Dryad rolls to the edge of the bed, and then lazily stretches out both arms.

"So quick. Perhaps you want to kiss again?"

"No, that's not necessary. Anyways, I want to go to another floor, is there a trap door or something like that here?"

The Dryad turned over with no trace of interest and nods at the corner of the room: "There."

Where she pointed to has a mushroom planted in a circle, it looks like a there's a flower bed there.

"Step on top of that magic circle."

I followed the Dryad's instruction and stood in the center of the circle.

"To which floor?"

"If you can, to the master of the「Cradle」please."

"That's a no-no."

The dryad nodding her head nonstop is pissing me off, but I ask her to sent me to the highest floor available.

"Okay, then let's go to floor 100's「Guardian Rider's Hall」, the Guardian there is strong so be careful."

"Yeah yeah, no problem."

After hearing my reply, she hunched her small shoulders and said: "Haaaa, need to be taught a lesson first before being good, huh." But she

did what I asked anyway.

“Then, let’s go. ■■■ moving target, towards floor 100「Guardian Rider’s Hall」.

The Dryad said a spell and the magic circle start emitting a green light and swirls into a tube of light.

When the light disappears, I have arrived on floor 100.

But, appearing in the main room is a bit much, right?

In front of my eyes sits a giant stationary metal magic being, as well as a round table on the side with three playful beauties piling up a pyramid using wooden blocks.

Perhaps my sudden appearance was kinda scary, because the busty beauty toppled over the wooden block pyramid, with a stunned expression.

Subconsciously I wanted to say “Sorry” with an expression of regret.

In short, I coughed a couple times to cover up.

“Just a moment —— how do I announce this?”

One of the beauties is speaking a strange language and pointed with her arm to the other side, so I nodded to show my agreement.

The excellent student with long straight hair has a calm vibe, but her speech pattern is completely destroyed, this is such a shame.

Even though I want to leave them behind and keep going, there is only one way to go down.

With this kind of design, I’m afraid I have to defeat the opponent to advance to the next floor.

When playing games you wouldn’t care, but in reality, if I am being restricted by this requirement, I just want to blast a hole in the ceiling and open a path to the top If I throw a temper tantrum here and get thrown back to the beginning by「Force Release」it will do more harm than good, so I unwillingly decide to wait patiently.

All three of the Beauties are wearing a mini skirt size hoodie with a sword sheath carrying a short rapier. The hilt of the sword looks like a rose, the texture is quite high class.

They are also equipped with steel gauntlets and steel greaves, but why is there no chestpiece or helmet? Unless there is no need to protect the heart and the head?

There's no reason for me to question it, two of them moved the table to the corner and the remaining one moved the giant magic being.

The AR display says that they are level 7 Golems. Each one has a race capacity called「Manage Technique」, they also all have a skill called「Magic Control」, and each of them have the title「Zen's Doll」.

The strange thing is that, even though they all have short swords, only one person has the「 One-Handed Sword」skill, the second one has the「Spear」skill and the last one has the「Polearm」skill.

Their appearance looks like the one attending Mia in the master chamber.

I'm recalling that Golems are created from alchemy using magic to create life.

Since it's still a type of human cloning, there will be several people with the same face. The face alone, is it taken from Mia?

The giant metal Golem finally stood up after being activated. Its massive body is near 4 meters tall. The being has quite a lot nails in it, the model looks like it's from before the last war.

Or maybe it's already in battle mode. The girl standing in the front flashed her sword.

She coughs cutely and says: "It's really impressive for you to come here Mr. Adventurer."

Even if you are reading off a script, it shouldn't sound so exaggerated.

In this situation the beautiful music and the atmosphere are both gone

now.

“But I am a merchant.”

“A merchant?”

The beauties looked a bit afraid, and looked at each other.

After staring at themselves for a while, they seem to have reach an understanding and continue: “——Adventurer! You came at a good time ——Praises to you.”

So I am forced to be an adventurer now, eh?

Even though their way of speaking is strange, it's still better than reading a script.

“Given you are to battle with the guardian —— so announced. After defeating the boss, you will have permission to continue —— so admitted. The victor will win the master’s treasures —— so assured.”

Although it’s better than reading from a script, this is like watching a grade school play.

Not noticing my cold expression, the beauties continue speaking according to the script: “Come, begin battle. The giant Golem will not show any mercy.”

After reading the long speech, the beauty looked at me with satisfaction. That really pissed me off.

The giant Golem starts coming towards me with mechanical noise at full force, too bad that the movement is slow and has a little bit of problem.

“No. 6, No. 7, after strengthening body scatter to the left and right, attack in a Z-formation.”

At first I thought translating the ancient tongue was enough, but the beauties are now speaking messed up english.

Since Torasayuya has given up on starting a Golem facility, they were probably taught by Arisa and Zen.

(So we have no idea how Arisa is related, but according to the RAW thats how it is…) The beauties that spread out into three directions, their foreheads start glowing. Looking more clearly at it, their forehead has a 500 yen coin sized glowing magic circle appear, next moment their status became「Strengthen Body」. Could this be「Manage Technique」?

Having said that, it looks like there's not much strengthening, it's only a little bit stronger than a normal human being.

I paid full attention on their location.

—— Not wearing a bra huh? That's outrageous.

(Paid attention he did) I have no choice but to be attracted. It's full of bounciness.

Maybe it's punishment for forgetting about refusing Mia, and while having such shameful thoughts, the giant metal Golem got close and pulls back his fist.

At this kind of distance you should roll towards the enemy's knees to dodge, but I decided not to do that.

I use「Raise Strength」and shot through a symbol on the Golem's forehead using a magic gun.

(So the classic golem has a symbol called "Emeth" or truth on their forehead, this is where the mana is being outputted and so on. That is why in classic D&D or any classic games you get rid of the symbol you get rid of the Golem) On the Magic giant's forehead there are English letters spelling "EMETH", because I destroyed an "E" the word became "METH".

(WE NEED TO COOK) (COME ON JESSE!) It might actually be three Hebrew letters, but this does not seem to be a counterfeit. The magic metal Golem stops moving. Yup, it's our world's trivia.

"How come —— it's so dumb"

"That's why I suggested to cover up the weak point —— it's so old."

"With that said, we need to decide to fight or run —— so I conclude."

Maybe they didn't think they would be defeated so easily, the beauties

don’t know what to do.

Can’t blame them. The main power force, the level 30 giant Golem, was defeated easily, leaving only the three level 7 themselves.

Their voices came back, and they still sound loud and clear.

“No. 5, No. 6, leave this to me, you guys go first! —— so I announce.”

“No. 7! We won’t forget you —— flee immediately.”

“This is not called leaving, but let's retreat first —— telling No.7.”

Like the expression on her face, her personality has slightly changed.

The No. 7 that just got a death flag focused on me, but I have never killed anyone for the sake of it, so never mind that.

The beauties wearing the same face are looking this way, their forehead is showing a glowing magic circle.

The magic circle shows a crystal clear「Magic Arrow」.

“Fire —— !”

They matched No. 5’s command and fired.I;m not sure if it’s to kill or to stun the enmy, but No.5 and No.6 have already started to run away.

The two used ropes on the wall and were pulled to the upper floor.

The high speed magic arrow has no homing ability, so my body used「Evasive Maneuvers」, and easily dodged the attack.

Facing No. 7’s short sword attack, I swiftly pulled back my head and dodged her attack, and then grabbed her extended arm and knocked her out.

To not commit any sexual harassment, don’t forget to point your ‘thing’ down.

(he means the thing males have but females dont have) I am now holding the fainted No. 7.

The soft feeling almost made me dizzy, but I can’t just leave a fainted

beauty alone, so I didn't have a choice. Thats right, I didn't have a choice.

Alright, that's enough holding. I lay her down on a fur hide and put her in the corner.

They used places in their underwear to hide weapons and magic potions. I was hoping for magic scrolls but there were none.

There are 10 magic potions. three medium grade, six low grade, the remaining two are「Cure Paralysis: Universal Use」and a medium grade「Magic Recovery Potion」.

Each weapon has an elegant craving, the「Market Pricing」skill showed me a price that proves that these aren't plain weapons.

But all of them look the same as a normal bronze weapons, but there are axes, naginata, gun blades, spears, large blades and war hammers, I decided to randomly take some.

The storage also has「Holy」or「God」level equipment, but unless I meet a high level enemy, I'll still be too lazy to change my title.

I use magic guns or close combat on most enemies, but if I meet a cockroach type monster by chance. I would need to throw away some of my less beloved weapons at it.

(I'd kill myself if I see cockroach monster, god they are scary.) There was a weak sound behind me. I turned and looked, in the center of the room a spiral staircase dropped down from the ceiling.

Looks like I completed the victory requirement.

I quickly put the potions and weapons in my storage, and I went over there.

Retrieving the magic core of the Golem is too much trouble, so I put the Magic Golem in my storage too, and I stepped onto the spiral staircase.

(Wait so since your too lazy to retrieve the core you put the entire thing, the entire GOLEM mind you in your storage? GG WP) The magic circle in the other end of the room is like the one in the the Dryad's room that's made with vines but this is different.

although there is also a cocoon made of vines, the vines have already withered. The cocoon hatches something that looks like the remains of a brown mannequin.

I gave the remains a prayer, and and took out a「Bottomless Water Bag」from the storage and poured water as an offering.

Hoping that this will give the other a little bit of peace—— “Water——!”

“Huh?”

The pale white hand of the mannequin grabbed my arm that has the water bag and, started drinking.

The brown mannequin started slowly changing while drinking water. A few minute later, it turned into a little girl, she looks the same as the Dryad downstairs.

“Now, give me Mana——”

I see that this one is not a Dryad, maybe a Succubus…….

After taking a couple hundred points of mana, the Dryad shows a satisfied face, like a geezer drink beer letting out a “Hoo wa”

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wldsuaupKoA Here, think of one of those) “Ah, aren't you the one that gave the me Mana downstairs?”

—— The me downstairs?

Feeling suspicious, I tried to questioned Dryad No. 2.

“All of them are me? Humans becoming different people is more strange. Because we are a forest type elf, we are linked together, but we can’t communicate without mana.”

Is this a type of Earth’s subspecies?

It’s mostly a network created using magic.

Being not very interested in the subject I asked Dryad No. 2 if she can bring me to a higher floor.

“Hee～, okay. Just wait a bit —— hee～ the line’s been cut.We need an elf that can use wood magic, then we can transport you to all kinds of places. Right now looks like the highest is floor 180.”

“That would be great. Sorry for the trouble.”

“Leave it on me～!”

The child announced with a puffed up chest.

I stepped onto the magic circle, and was transported to floor 180.

◆

“Bug’s nest?”

I can’t help but say it out loud. I look around floor 180, the wood and vines on the wall have been eaten, turning it into a nasty state.

The reason for the line being cut off is probably the bug’ nest’s fault.

Facing the monster bugs surrounding me, I shot at them using the magic gun in my left hand.

There are too much, if I keep this up I will be surrounded to the point of death —— in spite of being high level, my body is covered in bug guts.

I used my right hand to bring out an axe from my storage.

It’s a heavy axe, but my strength is high so I can use it with one hand.

Even though I don’t have a skill using axes, after attacking like a madman, I got the「Polearms」skill In a 3 meter wide corridor, I jumped around killing magic beings using my axe.

This is not because I enjoy battle, but because I have super high strength and a light body weight, using the axe maes my movement look like I’m dancing.

After fighting half of them I got lazy and took out the「Volcanic Rock」in

my storage and change my approach. I took the「Volcanic Rock」and kicked it at them and shot down the ones that are running away with my magic gun.

Because I don't want to be covered in bug guts, I didn't retrieve the magic cores. When I reach the staircase, I have killed over a hundred of those things.

Infront of the stairs, there are even more of those monsters on guard.

—— Gross!

Perhaps this is the reaction from using the「Volcanic Rock」, but the monsters became a little more fierce.

After the monsters shatter, The「Volcanic Rock」that's been smacked into the wall made a "pa pa" sound, and a hole was formed.

Looks like the wall has been corroded by the bug's nest.

Due to the difference of the air pressure it create a vacuum, sucking the air out. I grabbed onto the vine near the wall.

The air current quickly settles, and I continue to finish off the remaining enemies, climbing out of the hole in the wall.

"The scenery is so impressive ——"

If I didn't have something important to do, I would've enjoy this beautiful view. It makes me feel a bit wrong.

This is the entrance I first came from, the branches outside the hole has lost it's colour.

I can't see the top because of the clouds covering it and when I look down, I can't see the bottom either.

This doesn't match Torasayuya's information.

The design here shouldn't let the magic beings destroy the tree.

The bugs that have evaded the air current continue moving my way, so I used my magic gun and sprayed them while heading for the massive

staircase.

(PEW PEW PEW PEW PEW SPRAY AND PRAY SILVER 1 SCRUB [CSGO]) The guardian on the 190 floor is a sea anemone like magic being that can fire ice shots using tentacles. I defeated it easily, so it didn't leave much of an impression.

The other side of the door doesn't have any monster bugs, but it looks like the wood Golems workers that are used for maintenance are slowly repairing the damage done by the bug monsters.

They didn't have any interest in me, and wouldn't attack me or block my path, so I ignored them and continued moving.

◆

After that, I didn't face much trouble until I reached the Master chamber. It's been 30 minutes or so.

Of course the path is going to have traps, but beside the fact that the wood Golem workers have stopped working, I don't what it is.

Zen is waiting deep inside the master chamber.

Mia is on the throne, but still unconscious. Mia's HP recovered 3% but quickly diminished again.

"You got here surprisingly fast, I didn't think that could happen."

"Really?"

I shrugged at the surprised Zen.

To prevent him from being alarmed, I talked while slowly walking closer.

"If it's okay, can I have Mia back without fighting?"

Zen laughed.

"No, that wouldn't do. You have proved your qualifications when you

defeated the giant Metal Golem.”

Zen continued his personal speech.

“But, the title itself is not enough. Next will be an unwinnable battle between you and a formidable enemy. And as reward, you will get the Holy Sword「Gjallarhorn」.

Zen held up an sheathed sword, the sword is placed in a conical scabbard.

The sword showed on the AR display, it says it’s called「Gjallarhorn」, so it must be real.

I remember that Arisa mentioned this sword before. It was made by the king that created the「Mariyoshi Kingdom」.

Even though it’s not as good as my other Holy Swords, but it’s definitely better than any normal sword.

Speaking of which, how did he get a national class Holy Sword?

“Are trying to bait me with that carrot?”

“Of course! By giving back the「Gjallarhorn」to the king, your name will reach the heavens. If you wish, even becoming ‘Royalty’ will be in your hands.”

I know these words are suppose to encourage me, but the way Zen said ‘Royalty’ sound like he was saying ‘Dog shit’.

Speaking of which, I still don’t know what this guy’s objective is. When I asked before being forced out of the「Cradle」maybe he really wants to kill himself?

“Your opponents will be them.”

When Zen finished talking, his shadow extended to the middle of the room and three giant iron Golems appeared, but there are no words on their forehead. Maybe it’s so that I don’t find it’s weakness.

Also, seven beauties from behind the pillars stood behind the giant

Golems.

I can see the escaped No. 5 and No. 6, they all looked the same, but they have different hairstyles so I can tell it's them.

Because there are seven of them, I thought the No. 7 that I left at the「Guardian Rider Chamber」is here, but she was replaced by No. 8. Unlike the other girls, she is flat as a board.

(Of all thing syou notice that) "But if you are killed by your opponents, the Hero title will be forever lost to you."

In this guy's eyes, I am just level 10. He thinks that I can't defeat three level 30 iron giants.

Zen unfolds his arms, looked at the sky and said: "So, let me give everyone the Blessing of God ——「Limit Break」."

◆

Zen's body released a purple aura, engulfing the beauties, the Golems and me.

From what he just said, this is an enhancement magic. But I don't dare thank a clearly hostile person.

As if it reflected by my feelings, the purple aura on me disappeared.

The log shows that I resisted the「Limit Break」effect.

Because I didn't use any skills, this must be a unique skill.

"Now then, I hope you have an enjoyable death match."

After he finished talking, Zen starts using the「Cradle」's music stand-like control panel.

Then, a wall appeared between the room and the throne. After checking the map to see that it is not a normal wall, and the throne start moving up like a elevator moving to the top of the tree.

I dodged the「Magic Arrows」that come at me while I was checking the map.

Facing multiple magic arrows, I used「Lighting Step」to dodge them all.

—— Is this too much?

I look at the direction where the arrow flew from, and found the beauties with a horrified expression.

But, it's not just the expression.

Why are the tears dripping from their faces red?

Why are they not speaking in their strange ways but roaring like an injured wild beast.

—— like how the status says, aren't their limits broken?

Although their power has increased, breaking the body's safety limit and forcing it to move will only lead them to destruction.

Like how Zen says, are they just tools?

While my mind was occupied with these thoughts, the iron giant Golems and the beauties start moving, and their speed is unlike the time at the「Guardian Rider's Chamber」.

Looking closely, their hands and feet have several magic circles spinning around them.

Does Zen's earlier「Limit break」effect have a visual effect?

The iron giants also have the same light circles on their hands and feet.

However, if the control system can't keep up with the enhanced speed, the iron giants' movement has become unnatural, it looks like it might trip.

I chose to fight the nearest iron giant first.

Although I wanted to test out Zen' powers that are affecting the iron Golems, compared to a level 30 dragon, I still haven't gotten hurt. So there's no point comparing.

The iron Golem that lost its balance threw a punch, and I gave him a

shoulder throw. It was a very simple task.

Using the iron giant's body I protected myself from the magic arrows shot by the beauties.

They fired 3 shots each, so 21 shots in total.

I used「Evasive Maneuvers」to move my body and dodged the arrows that are as fast as bullets.

Even if I am fired upon with an automatic rifle, I could still dodge it.

Perhaps everything is going according to plan, after I dodged the arrows the second iron Golem came at me.

Like a mad wind it came with a punch, I dodged with a back step.

Keeping the distance like this, I used the strongest gun and concentrated fire on the iron Golem's leg, 3 shots from the gun destroyed it's knee, and the iron Golem fell head first and slides across the floor.

While the third iron Golem came near I grabbed a short spear from my storage and stabbed the second iron giant's leg.

＞＞＞Obtain skill「Spear」

I immediately put points in the「Spear」skill. Removing the spear from the second iron giant's leg, and I threw it at the third iron Golem.

After hearing the rod snap, the short spear broke and disappeared.

A hole opens in the iron Golem's chest and, like it was hit by a giant fist, the iron Golem is sent flying.

The wall behind the iron giant also has a giant hole opened in it.

Did my spear do that?

——That's a frightening power.

Aiming at both the first and the second Golem, I took out another short spear and threw it, the result was the same.

I caught a glimpse of a light disappear from my radar, and I focus on another light coming from behind me.

Three Golems attacked in a line.

It made me remember the old squad formations, looking at their equipment, you can tell Zen is not letting them play around. The one in front is carrying a shield and short sword, second is carrying a naginata, and third is using a long axe.

I'm afraid that after the first person blocks my attack and the two in the back will attack me with long range attacks.

The two beauties hiding behind a large shield attacks with two times the speed compared to the time at the「Guardian Rider's Chamber」.

When arriving into my attack range, I lightly kicked the shield in front of me.

After losing her balance she landed on her ass, the other 2 really did attacked from the left and right.

At first I thought making the shielded beauty lose attack power but, the other two are a lot faster than I thought.

I used my hand to push away the one using the axe onto the one with a naginata.

And then pulled the axe, and knocked out the beauty who got pulled in by hitting her with my knee. Perhaps I used to much power, because I hear bone breaking.

If I don't carefully control my power, I could heavily injure them.

Using the axe from the fainted beauty, I sweep it under the beauty with the naginata that just stood back up and knocked her out. To keep her knocked out, I used the hilt of the axe to lightly hit her once.

—— Five left.

Using the iron Golem's scraps as a cover, four of the members came closer.

To stop the shielded beauty from taking action, I swung the axe at the shield to make her lose balance —— Strange?

The plan has failed.

It seems that the axe is too sharp, it easily cut the shield in half.

I then dodged the short sword that emerged from the shield.

At this distance, polearm weapons are hard to use.

Putting the beauty with the shield for later, I focused on the other four.

I can't see them, so I use the radar to follow their movements.

During this time, using quick movements like in a fighting game, another shielded beauty jumped in with a warhammer.

While paying attention to the radar, I didn't think that there would be a frontal attack, so my reaction is slowed.

Because of this, I quickly used the axe to block the warhammer, leaving a opening, and a beauty with a claymore jump in from the side.

Because their faces is the same I get confused, good thing they have different weapons.

The beauty with the claymore is going for a horizontal cut.

If this continues, this defenceless body of mine is in danger.

—— Is what normal people would say.

I quickly stomped the ground, creating a hole, and kick the floor board up to use as a cover.

At first it was to contain the opponent, but the surface area of the floor board was too big, even the claymore beauty is launched in the air.

Is this the other world version of tatami flip?

As my mind was thinking about this stupid thought, the next attack came.

The shield beauty jumped and the short spear beauty slid down her shield, and tried to stab me from below.

After dodging, I lost my balance.

I used my ankle's power to bring myself back up, but I grabbed the shielded beauty's shoulder because I didn't have enough power.

The warhammer beauty stood back up and attacked me from the air.

The hand that I have on the shield beauty's shoulder pushed and sent her flying, barely letting her dodge the warhammer attack, and getting her stuck in the ceiling.

(How is she still alive??? http://vignette1.wikia.nocookie.net/beelzebub/images/1/16/Buried_Oga.png/to-width-down/200?cb=20130311215530) The slow moving scimitar beauty fired magic arrows at me.

—— Really, this is too much work.

I grabbed onto the ceiling to dodge the「Magic Arrow」, using both hands to land, like the old hip hop dances. I helicopter kicked both the short spear beauty and the warhammer beauty, knocking them out.

After using the helicopter kick I used the shield to catch myself. High defence enemies are a pain.

—— Only three left.

The claymore beauty came out of the ground and roared at me.

Not only are her eye dripping red, but her nose and ears are dripping blood as well. The body is in danger. Her HP has dropped to half already.

The purple magic circle on her forehead is getting bigger.

It's expanding to the width of a basketball, making an abnormal amount of magic arrows, five times as many.

Her mana is clearly zero, so how can she keep on firing arrows?

Maybe the impact on her body is heavy, you can clearly see the blood veins on her arms and hands.

I dodged the first wave by zig zagging across, and then used my hand to grab the second iron giant's leg and used it as a shield. So I am blocking one side of unlimited arrows while getting near the claymore beauty.

Using the temporary shield to receive the attack, the beauty waved her sword.

I then released the iron giant’s leg and grabbed an axe with my other hand to catch the opponent's claymore.

—— A bad premonition came.

I don’t know if I used a「Polearm」skill or some other skill.

But because of this premonition, I dodged sacrificing both the axe and claymore.

＞＞＞Obtained skill「Sense Danger」

Using two hands to grab the axe that's been cut in half, I jumped back.

Behind me, the shield beauty who returned to battle is coming in close.

In spite of watching, I thought the opponent would attack with her short sword, so I didn’t completely dodge her shield attack.

Like a car, I crashed into the air, the claymore beauty came swinging together with the scimitar beauty.

With that said, there’s nowhere to dodge, but if I give up everything is over.

According to my current position and actions, I thought of a couple plans the take away their fighting ability without killing them.

Did I really think of this many plans in a span of a second? Of course it’s thanks to the abnormally high intelligence.

I destroyed the claymore using the broken two handed axe, and I destroyed the scimitar with the piece on my other hand.

＞＞＞Obtained skill「Weapon Destruction」

Like a lost balanced spin top, the scimitar beauty rolls on to the floor.

Facing the beauty with now broken claymore, I used the hand axe handle and knocked her out.

—— Only 2 left.

I first threw aside the scimitar beauty and focused on the shield beauty.

As if the body's blood vein has already ruptured, the girl's skin and clothes are all red.

The more important thing is that, her HP is critically low. If I try to knock her out, I might kill her with the force.

I don't have a choice, I threw aside the axe handle in my left hand and focused on the opponent's short sword.

I watched the high speed stab and grab the blade using 2 fingers, and used my abnormally high strength to take away her weapon.

＞＞＞Obtained skill「Empty Handed Disarm」

After taking her weapon, the shield beauty is confused. I grabbed her shield and created a space between her and the shield.

The shield beauty tried to block the attack with her other hand, but it's too late.

The light punch has knocked her out.

I turned to take care of the scimitar beauty, but she is already knocked out from spinning too much.

After confirming the battle to be over, the way to the throne has opened.

Since the beauties are about to die, I used the potions from the「Guardians Rider's Chamber」and restore their health.

I was going to save one for Mia, but if a person dies because I was being

cheap then I would feel uneasy, so I generously used them all.

Not willing to let the large breasted beauty die is one of the reasons, but it's more because of sympathy, because of their master abandoning them.

(more because sympathy, right….) I stepped into the hallway, setting the title that Zen wanted.

◆

Zen’s applause echoes in the large room.

“That was amazing. I welcome you, new Hero.”

The shadow, controlled by Zen, gave me「Gjallarhorn」.

“Your objective is a hero?”

“Of course.”

“Why go through all this trouble? Why not go to the「Saga Kingdom」?”

I loudly asked.

The scene of the beauties covered in blood made me shake, even my heart is in fury.

“Hee, Parian’s hero? When I visited, he already kicked the bucket.”

“There has to be a second generation?”

“Is it that season already? But no, the timing isn’t right.”

“What does that mean?”

“You wouldn’t understand even if I explained.”

Looks like I won’t get an answer to what it means.

As I was asking questions, my heart calmed down.

“I ask magician, or is null-death king better? Are you really searching for death?

“The answer is yes and no.”

“I don’t want to play 21 questions with you.”

Hearing this, Zen started laughing like a maniac.

Under his hood, two purple flames start shaking like crazy.

“Wahahaha, really, so it’s like this. You’re not the hero’s descendant, but a guy summoned by the「God Kingdom」”

“I haven’t heard of this kingdom.”

Hmm, I remember that Japan was called this before the war.

“Heehahaha, there’s no point in acting stupid. What were you praying for to the cruel god? What are you chasing? What are you wishing for!”

“I didn’t wish for anything.”

Really, I don’t get what he is saying.

“To be honest, I wished for a vacation?”

This is what I am always praying for.

“Hoo hahaha, A good desire. it really matches the hero’s name.”

“Then what did you pray for? And why aren’t you human?”

“You want me to be clear? Can’t you see already? That’s right, I am the king of the night, a null-death being. I prayed to god for an undying body, a life without hunger, the power to fight unjust violence.

“So your body turned into this……”

Zen opened up his arms, shaking his head while laughing.

“This, you guessed wrong. God let me reincarnate into a healthy baby. And I was raised by respectable parents, and even found a strong and beautiful wife in life.”

So it’s like that, then why —— “I completely integrated into this new life. Even though my previous life was taken from me by violence, I lived a peaceful and quiet life.”

Zen took off his hood.

His skeletal face has two purple flames burning where he’s eye is

suppose to be, inside his eye sockets.

“I watched my wife and her noble parents sent to jail, and was executed under false charges. After being resurrected like this by「God’s Blessing」, I saw heads placed on the city walls, my parents included. And at the city gate, my wife’s corpse after being ravaged and abandoned.”

But there are no tear on his pale face.

Except, the purple flames erupt in his eye sockets.

“No need for pity. My race turned into「Null-Death Monster」. I executed whoever executed my family, and went on a killing spree killing any nobles who aided in the death of my family. I killed of them.”

He can’t shed tears, because his face is just bones.

(If he can’t cry then I will cry for him 。･ﾟﾟ･(>д<)･ﾟﾟ･。) “After reviving, I was going to go to where my wife is waiting, in the afterlife. But because of「God’s blessing」I was not allowed to do that. Even with「God’s Messenger's Holy Sword」, I still couldn’t die.”

He says that: “It really is「God’s Blessing」”.

“Hero, you are very strong. Yet you still have untapped power in you. But don’t forget, mortals are weak. If you truly treasure the girl who is with you, make sure that she doesn’t abuse God’s given power.”

In the「All Purpose House」, I think I was given the same warning.

“This type of power is too strong for humans. Don’t go down the road of no return, like me……”

“ —— Thanks for your warning. I will keep your word in my heart”

“Alright hero. Everything that needed saying is said. Give me the final strike! At least destroy me before my heart also turns into demon king.”

Thats right, like magician Zen —— No, Null-death king Zen said.

Following his order, I pulled out the「Gjallarhorn」.

The blade spirals like a screw, an unimaginable sword.

I prayed while holding the sword up, and stab the Null-death king with all

my might.

“Waha…...wahahaha. Ena, my other wing Ena. I can finally come to your side.” after Zen said that, his body fell apart like sand.

His robe slowly fell to the ground, with a *pa* sound.

You could hear a final “Thank you”.

＞＞＞Obtained title「Null-death King Slayer」

＞＞＞Obtained title「Conquearer of the Cradle」

◆

“Hahaha, I am defeated .”

“I am defeated .”

From Zen's remains came two floating purple lights.

"Goodbye, Hero."

"It's your victory."

Feeling evil in them, I slashed at them with the holy sword. The light scattered, but returned to its shape flying towards the sky.

"See you next time."

"See ya."

Then, the light disappeared into the ceiling.

◆

Maybe it were angels? But I felt evil slashing them.

However, this isn't the time to be thinking about this.

(how many times has he said this already. Answer:too much) Because —— "System Notice, the「Cradle」's self destruction sequence has been activated. Staff and trainees please escape at once. I repeat ——."

—— Thats right, because of that announcement.

I hurried to Mia's side and gave the unconscious her a Mana restoration potion, since this potion has not yet been tested, I made her drink one thirds of the potion each time —— exactly one potion later she woke up.

"Mia, can you recognize me?"

".....Onii-chan?"

Thats right.

Mia's eye slowly opened Since she has not fully recovery, her eyes are still cloudy.

"This is?"

"「Torasayuya's cradle」's throne room."

After hearing what I said, Mia tried to look for Zen's shadow.

"It's okay, he's gone. And will never appear again."

"Really?"

"Really."

Right now is not a good time to be chatting.

Self destruction sequence has been activated. Staff and Trainees please leav —— I need to stop it as quickly as possible.

"Mia, do you know a way to stop the「Cradle」's self destruction?"

"Let me try."

I carried Mia to the control panel.

After some tinkering with the control panel, Mia shakes her head: "Nope."

That was fast.

No wonder Torasayuya... sigh.

(I guess Torasayuya was serious when he said explosions are romance)
I took over for Mia. Of course it's in「Elf Tongue」, but there's no problem.

I used the touch screen to find the right target —— Got it.

After confirming the details, a certain detail made me "Tsh".

"Satou?"

"Yes, sorry. Don't worry. Mia you are definitely going to get out of here."

Looks like Zen doesn't want Mia to die, this is set for Mia and her partner to escape.

But, everything except this function is locked.

Just following Mia closely you can be transported, but the beauties downstairs can't, even the No. 7 I left on the「Guardian Rider's Chamber」can't be saved.

After trying so hard to keep them alive, I can't let those large breasted beauty be sacrificed.

It seem that the timer can still be changed, so I reset it to 1 minute, carried Mia, and ran down the stairs.

The menu's timer also matches the timer for the machine.

This type of control system supporting restarting, this kind of convenience is often praised by game developers.

"Okay Mia, listen."

"Yes."

I gathered the beauties and made Mia hold their hands.

Then use a belt to tie Mia and the beauties together to prevent any slip-ups.

"I must save one more person."

"Satou."

Mia pull some weak movement —— even so she tried to stop me.

After confirming the timer, I patted Mia in the head: "Don't worrying, I wouldn't die."

—— 15 seconds left.

"I promise."

"Promise, promise for real! Promise we'll meet again? Okay?"

Mia said with a trembling tongue.

—— 3 seconds left.

"Yes yes, I'll definitely live to return."

I nodded at the disappearing Mia.

—— I don't have an interest in killing myself. So I will definitely return.

◆

My hand grabbed the holy sword「Gjallarhorn」, I ran at full speed to the

「Audience Hall」.

Mia’s escape might’ve been a signal, because the moment she escaped, the「Cradle」‘s self destruction started.

The walls and vines turned white and became very weak.

Because of the「Find Trap」skill, I dodged some broken floor and continued going down the hallway.

After running down the first large staircase the ceiling became white.

Facing white obstruction blocking the road, I used a kick to remove it.

“So salty!”

—— Is this white stuff「Salt」?

I spit out the salt in my mouth.

I know that's a little gross, but no one can blame me.

Going down the stairs is too long, I grabbed and slided down a pillar.

Normally I wouldn’t dare do that but my fear is stronger than my cowardice, I stabbed my sword in the pillar to slow me down.

The holy sword didn’t even scratch. I successfully go down 8 floors quickly.

Running towards the giant hole in the hole, slowly getting closer to the edge.

Then the thing I did was a bit …… yes, was a little bit hesitant.

I took a deep breath, I was scared of the height. Fighting the fear is not something easy to do.

Then I finally, took a step forward..

—— Before I continued falling.

If someone from the outside saw, I would look like someone who wants to kill himself. But this is my action after carefully assessing the situation.

I used the cracks that are appearing in the tree bark as a foot stand and quickly moved down.

I need to escape the the tree's trunk, it seem there's a possibility that I will fall straight down to the ground, but I don't have to worry about that. The scale's difference is prevent it a little.

Because the cracks and raises have different sizes, just a little farther there are some of landings.

Normally this danger level is very high, but I was tested in the「Seiryuu City」, so there's no problem.

Enjoying the thrill of skydiving, I arrived at floor 100's「Guardian Rider's Chamber」.

"Is this real or not ——"

Due to the salt platforms holding on, I still have some time before I fall down through the floor.

" —— The root is also going to collapse."

Earlier, when I was jumping, I didn't notice that the tree roots was shaking while sinking into the earth, the roots have probably salivated tree saps.

I don't think it's a good idea to continue what I was doing.

But this is not that big of a problem.

I used the holy sword to open up the wall of the「Guardian Rider's Chamber」. This time not with the「Gjallarhorn」but with the sword of the「Holy Sword King」. Because the「Gjallarhorn」 isn't good for chopping, so I changed it.

When killing high level demons, the holy sword is amazing, but the sword of the「Holy Sword King」doesn't work out either, it's scarily sharp.

I slightly opened up the wall, and successfully entered the chamber.

Then I carried No. 7 on my shoulder and I ran for it.

But, I didn't run down stairs.

"—— is there anyone here?"

"I'm here～"

Hearing my call, Dryad No. 2 responded.

The sound seems stable, I guess the tree collapsing, isn't life threatening to her.

"Can you bring us outside the tree?"

"No."

The response was clean.

Don't worry I knew this is going to happen —— "But, you only need to give me a seed I touched with my my magic, then I can send you to plant the seed."

—— however, dryad No. 2's smiling face says that this isn't a necessary.

There no problem with mana. But the seed —— "What kind of seed is needed?"

"Yes, because I just need to repair the line, so any plant seed is good～"

If I knew earlier I would've pick a couple fruits.

I couldn't find anything in the chamber, but there should be something on the upper floor.

—— No, I have just the thing.

"Is this seed okay? Let's start."

"Wait…… there's no problem with this seed, but I need 3 times the mana? Do you not care about me withering?"

Three times of mana is a thousand points.

My mana's already restored, losing one third of my mana is okay.

"No problem. I'll leave it to you."

"Okay～"

I went to my storage and took out a fruit that was given to me by my kids.

The Dryad ate the fruit, then held out her hands.

Paired with a chirp sound, touched my lips, and was violently drained of

mana.

After the draining, I feel a like I lost a lot of blood. It's like I used「Meteor」.

After leaving a pop sound, Dryad No.2 moved her face away.

"I finally connected."

Face full of satisfaction, Dryad No. 2 dragged me by the hand to the magic circle.

"Then let's go～"

Dryad No. 2 lights up the ground and said a command, the green light circle formed a gate.

After a strange feeling, we have moved to a tree that's at least 1000 years old.

"Thanks for your help, Dryad."

"Yes～ you're welcome. Anyways I ate so much mana and I'm full."

The Dryad responded laughing, then tilted her head and asked: "Right, don't you guys need to escape?"

"Escape?"

—— Why?

I didn't ask any more after seeing what Dryad No. 2 pointed at, my entire face lost colour.

To be honest, compared to facing high level demon and falling without rope, the situation is making feel even more goosebumps.

I held No. 7 on my shoulders, then I held out my hand to Dryad No.2.

"Don't worry. As long as there is a forest, I wouldn't die."

Believing what the little girl said, I held No. 7 tightly and charged out of here.

With the low thundering sounds, it's a massive wave of「Salt」.

Getting caught by the wave would definitely suffocate us. No, we would

get crushed before that.

But after what I have been through in the shadow, I think I wouldn't die here. But being buried by salt for several years would be a pain.

Pushing open the dry wood, I rolled on the soft ground and continued running.

＞＞＞Obtained skill「All-Terrain Movement」

I feel the pressure on my shaking vision, after getting the「All-Terrain Movement」skill, I put a point in the「Carry」skill that I didn't care for at all.

Running suddenly became much lighter.

I dodged the roots on the ground and running in a line that I speculated.

My speed is as fast as a car.

Behind me is a violent white wave, slowly getting closer with every step I take.

——Hmm, I am about to be caught.

Think.

Quicky, think.

Why else would I have such high intelligence.

If I can't even have a skill to get out of this.

What new skill can I use?

I already used the「Run」skill already.

Then, what else is there?

—— The air became damp.

No time.

In front of my eyes there is some light.

Is it water? A pond or swamp?

No matter what it, is there is no difference. I can't think about useless things like that.

What to do to stop a tsunami?

Yes, a wall.

—— Wall?

Take the debris out of the storage?

No, it would just be washed away. It would increase the danger.

Salt landing next to me like a volcanic eruption, stopping me from thinking, the salt that landed in the water made a water pillar.

This scene gave me an idea.

What?

Pochi and Tama's crying faces flashed before my eyes. What is this memory?

"The water boiling pot is angry〜?"

"Help! The person in the water boiling pot is angry."

Don't run with the lantern.

The salty water flashing on made me feel uncomfortable, need to focus all on running.

I don't need a useless fire spell like small fire bullet, if I only had earth magic to make a wall—

——Useless?

No, that's not right.

The memory of Pochi and Tama made me remember something.

For not interfering my road choices, I open the map in a small window to confirm the right way.

Good, this can work.

I go slightly off the road I am on, I have never ran so seriously before.

I can’t rely on my leg power, there a hole in my boots. My feet are in massive pain.

A couple second before I reach the destination, I opened the menu to prepare.

——Now, create a bulwark (Something that prevent tsunami? makes it weaker?

Thanks to the translation of the WN to some of the names for names and weapons names) I used「Think Control」on the menu and used magic.

Of course, I chose just the small fire bullet.

The high temperature fire flies in the air.

At a critical time, all the heat heated a massive water tower.

Of course not just 1 shot. I shot 3 times into the water pillar, creating hot steam.

“When water become steam it, expands 1000 times.”

I think it was Arisa that said this.

After the last shot, the most of the water became steam, giving the steam a push.

The salt tsunami, stopped after violently smashing into the wall of steam.

——However, it only stopped it for a moment. The two masses are almost the same.

The second wave punched through the steam wall.

The salt tsunami also came in through the steam wall from the side, forcing me to cover down.

In this situation, a lot of people would lost hope.

If No. 7 is awake she would be screaming too.

—— But I have to say it's is according to plan.

This short amount of time is all I needed.

This short amount of time is all I needed to reach the second place.

In front of me is a plain, a wetland that looks like a plain.

I am running through the wetland just like they do in mangas.

There is plenty of water in this zone, so I started the next step.

So I keep on blasting the fireballs.

At the target area, I used the「Calculation」and「Fire Magic」skill to instruct me.

The thick steam wall blocked the salt tsunami, and I safely reach the foot of the mountain.

＞＞＞Obtained skill「Walking on water」

＞＞＞Obtained skill「Survivor」

＞＞＞Obtained title「Arsonist」

＞＞＞Obtained title「Fire Tyrant」

＞＞＞Obtained title「Dispeller of Despair」

◆

After climbing to the top, I put No. 7 on the soft ground.

According to the map, I am between the「Cradle」and the「Grey Rat Kingdom」.

Mia and the other beauties are on the other side of the mountains, looks like everyone is okay.

For safety I planned to go there as fast as possible, but my kids and the shop owner are there by her side. When did they get here?

If I had a cell phone I would tell them that I am safe, but there's no such thing here so there's nothing I can do. I'll see if I have any with that function from the kingdom or in the maze city.

With no hurry to return, I stood here and watch the end of「Torasayaya's Cradle」.

From the plains to the cliff is all the「Cradle」's zone.

I looked at the fog of salt that's been raised as high as the trees.

There's a one special salt tower as if it's Zen's tombstone.

As the salt pillars fall, every magic being on the map disappears.

At that time the record begin moving in a insane speed.

It's just like what happened at「Dragon's Valley」.

I slowly looked through the record, and find that i got a "Defeated all enemies on the map" message.

Like in the maze, automatically picks up all the loot.

This time there is no「Fountain」type.

I put all my loot is a folder called「Torasayuya's Cradle」.

I will start moving after I clean my storage. most of the stuff are just magic being corpses and broken tools. Others are「Zen's Grimoire」and「Torasayuya's Room's Bookshelf」.

Under the salt fog, trees and roots are being torn and moved around.

After praying, I turned away.